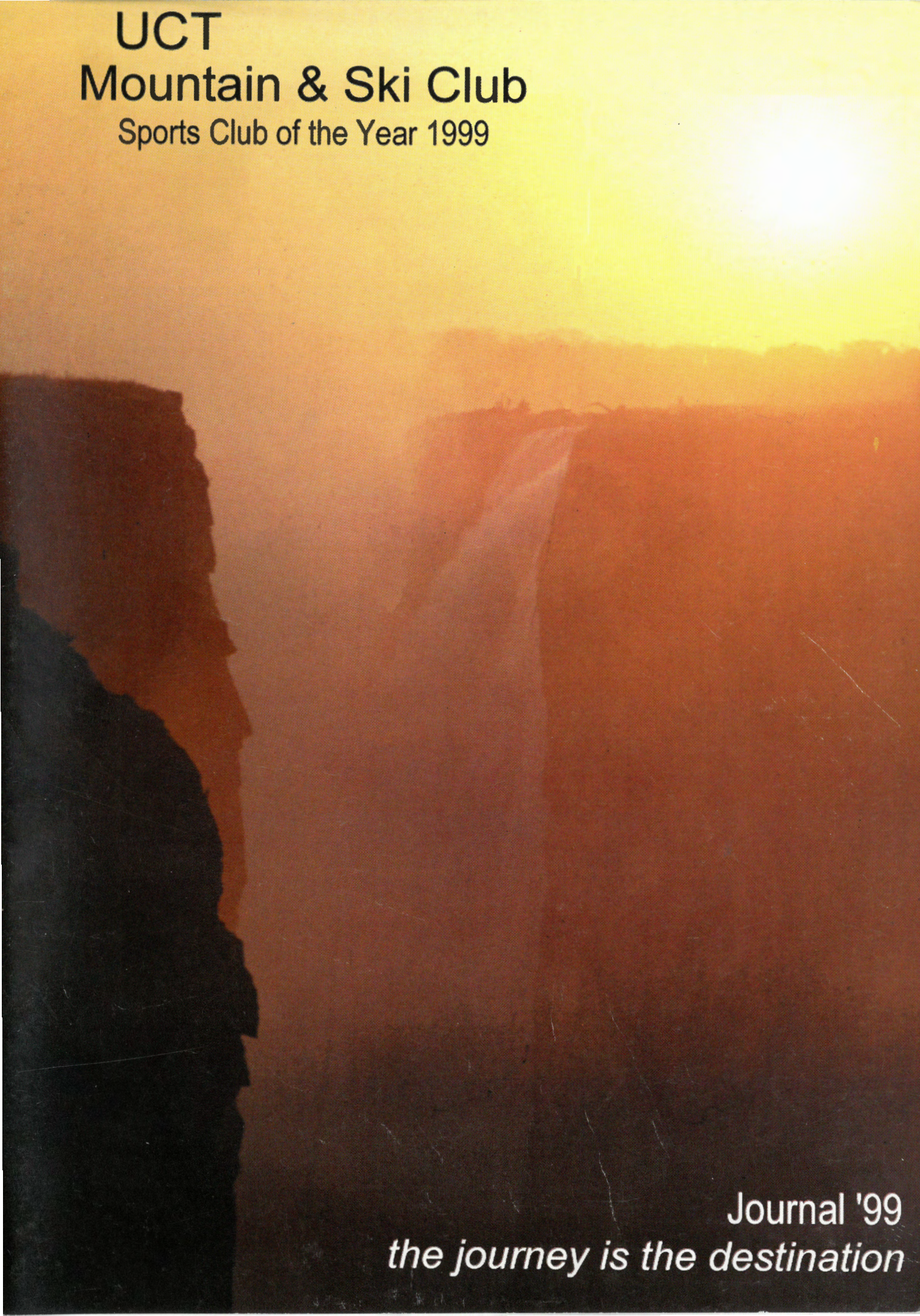
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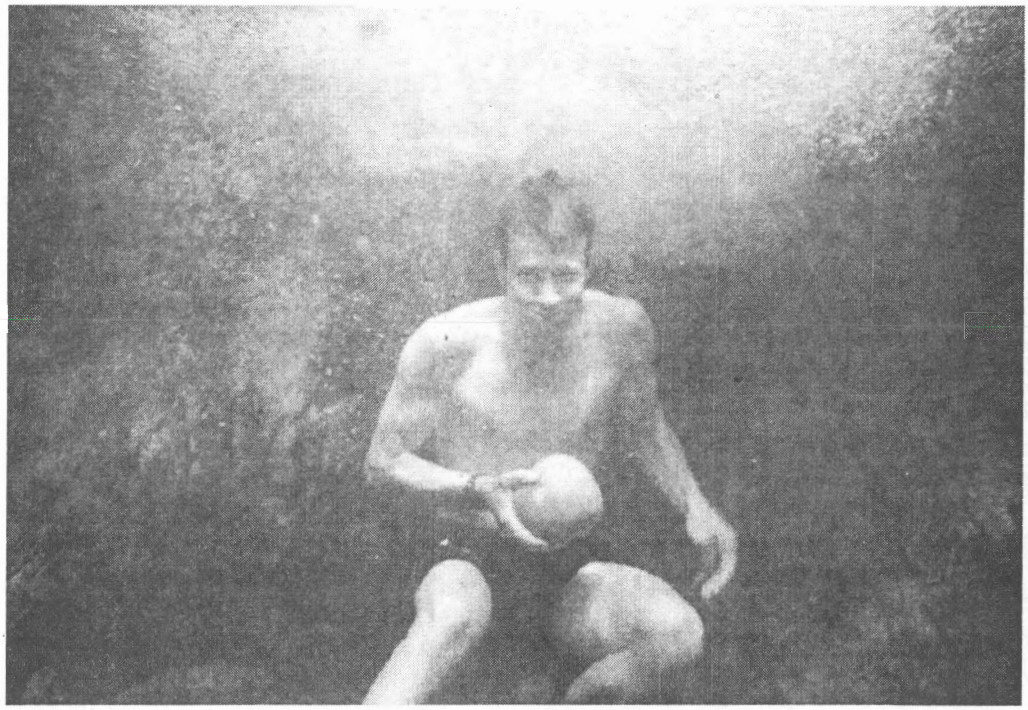
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Mountain & Ski Club Journal 1999

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NOT THE MILLENIUM EDITION!

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring in the false, ring in the true.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

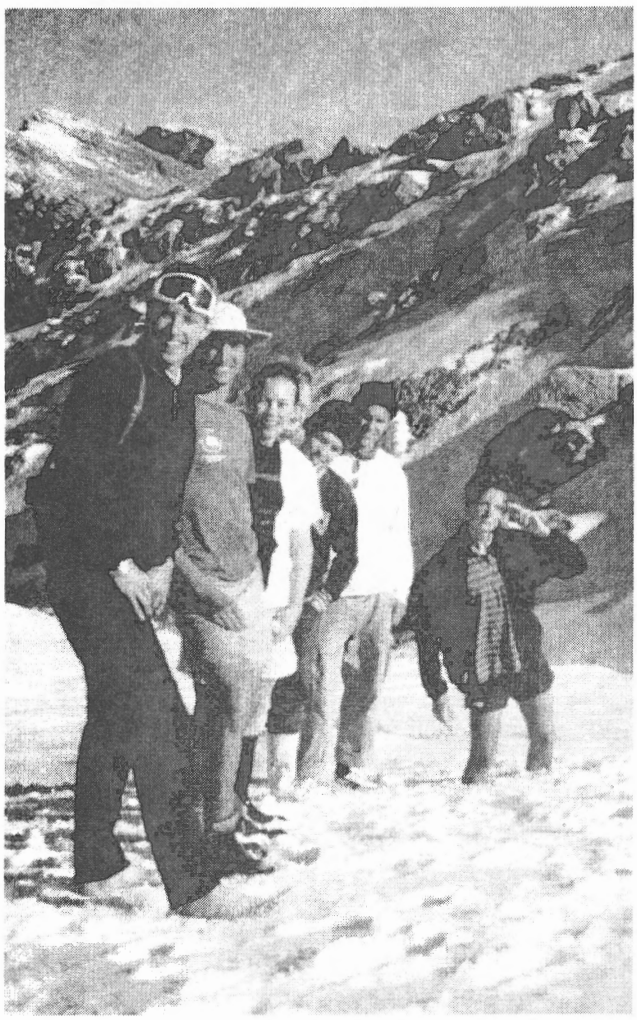
Tennyson, *In Memoriam*

I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons... I know that none dare challenge me when I say I am an African. – President Thabo Mbeki

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Deep peace of the Running Wave to you
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Celtic Benediction

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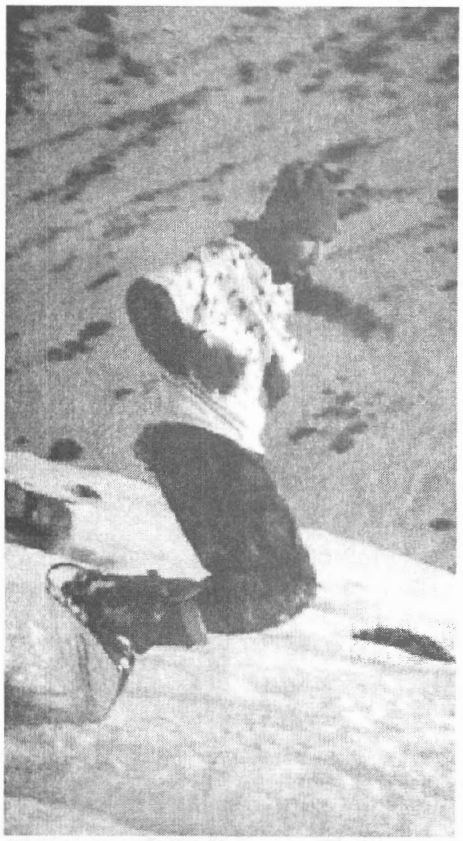
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Photography

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Title page photo: courtesy of Mark Johnston
MSC Gallery

The bliss of growth,
the glory of action,
the splendor of beauty,
for yesterday is but a dream,
and tomorrow is only a vision.
But TODAY well-lived makes
every yesterday a dream of happiness
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well therefore to this day!
Such is the salutation of the dawn.
From the Sanskrit





The 1999 Mountain and Ski Club Committee



Absent: Mark Johnston – Climbing Walls Convenor; Alan Matthews – Huts Convenor; John Moss – President

The New Committee



EDITORIAL



The journey is the destination. For me, these words sum up the ethos of mountaineering in general and the Mountain & Ski Club in particular.

They are as equally valid for those who, like me, are just beginning to discover the beauty of mountaineering, as they are for those who like to run up Everest before breakfast, or merrily solo Montagu's infamous *Switch Bitch* (grade 30) as a prelude to afternoon tea. Being in the mountains should be an opportunity to experience the way life should be lived – in the company of friends, in the ease of solitude, with humility, generosity and gratitude. We do not hike or climb to get from A to B, but to revel in the in-between.

Mountaineering should not be seen as an elite sport, only for the mega-experienced or superfit. Like anything else, you get out what you put in. The rewards are there for everyone who has eyes to see and heart to give. It's not about achievement but rather points the way to a purer existence.

The true journey is inside ourselves, and is lived every moment from birth to death. We may not be able to control what we experience on that journey, but we can determine how we will deal with what comes our way: with compassion or selfishness, with strength or weakness, with courage or despair. The point is not to arrive, but to explore; to come to know the still point within ourselves, to accept what is true and reject what is false. It is not an easy journey to make and we must travel alone, but we will find companions along the way.

It is only by undertaking the journey that we can grow as human beings and discover the kind of people we want to be. Every journey has its end, and if we have lived life the way it should be lived, when death comes it will not be a source of anxiety but will rather be regarded as completion. When the journey itself becomes a destination, it is an opportunity to live every day to the fullest – because after all, a single day is all we ever have. The journey is not a linear highway, straight as the N2, but is a path spiraling ever closer to the center point of existence.

In this journal are glimpses of many journeys. I would like to thank everyone who was generous enough to share their experiences with us – the club as a whole. We are the richer for your contribution. Thank you also to everyone on the 1999 committee, for your support and friendship. Thanks especially to Kevin Iles, my co-editor who handled the advertising and financial side of things with the utmost efficiency, and who was always ready with ideas and encouragement – I could not have done it without you. I can truly say that my eighteen months as an active member of the MSC have been among the best in my life, and I look forward to another year of great people, great places and great experiences. Life's a journey – enjoy the ride!

Jocelyn Newmarch

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 1998/1999

Membership & Participation

After some fabulous Witels trips, I was surprised by the incredible support during O-week by members old and new. The promotion of the Mountain & Ski Club went very well resulting in a new membership high. The events of the term were well attended and much socialising was had by all, especially on the numerous sundowner events. The extra huge Freshers Country Meet was pulled off successfully thanks to many supportive sub-leaders and not-so-fresh freshers.

This year saw a good involvement of newer members and forthcoming volunteers led a few outstanding meets! I encourage this strongly for variety and continuously great meets.

Activities:

Hikes

Thanks to Adriano, for ensuring a superb selection of hikes for each term this year. There were always plenty of day hikes and weekends away. The holiday meets this year have been brilliant! The favourites on the Peninsula and further abroad were well attended, although we were a bit unlucky with rain at times. The weekend trips included the Cedarberg, Montagu, and plenty to Hoare Hut. Extra's included sandboarding (twice!) and abseiling.

Climbing

Carel Haumann, mountaineer extraordinaire, has really hoisted UCT climbing a helluva long way up. His impeccable organisation of climbs, and enthusiasm to teach has been astounding. He ran a beginner's climbing course before the first meets of the year. Although initially not well attended, this made it clear that there were meets for beginners. The MSC went climbing at Silvermine, Kalk Bay, Peers Cave, Table Mountain, The Mine, Muizenberg Crag, the Hole, Skoorsteenkop, Hellfire, Cedarberg, Montagu, Natal and Watervalboven to mention a few. Carel also catered for the more serious climber, by advertising what ability was needed for specific meets. This drew the top UCT climbers closer to the MSC activities. I wish Carel all the best for his expedition to Mount Kenya in November / December.

Mark Johnston decided to get better at the world, and went overseas in March, after a tremendous involvement with the UCT MSC. As climbing convenor he ensured the wall and relations were well kept. He helped out with the club's climbing and bolted more Montagu rocks. He was succeeded by James Smith, who was one of the original pioneers of the UCT indoor climbing wall. James took the job by the grips and has the continued good support of wall climbers. This complemented the club's hectic outdoor climbing schedule perfectly. Together with Keith Forbes, he staged a very entertaining 'Decathlon' fun climbing-ish competition that went off extremely well! James and Robyn took over the arrangement of the UCT climbing teams for the SASSU National Climbing Competition in Durban, which we won!

Socials

Each Wednesday of term social evenings



were held which have been very varied this year, including slide shows, informational talks, climbing videos, and a multimedia presentation. These informal get-togethers allowed visitors and members to share weekend experiences and were utilised to arrange future activities. Several larger functions such as the Barn Dance, the Cheese & Wine and the Cocktail Party were extremely sociable. Well done to Alex for the excellent work as Socials convenor. The second quarter's Decathlon Climbing Competition was very enjoyable, as previously mentioned.

Development

This year saw another energetic development program both externally and within UCT. There were joint hikes and climbs with the LEAF College hiking club who are becoming more equipped to run themselves. Internally there were many educational opportunities available to club members. A climbing course and a First Aid course were co-ordinated, thanks to good work by Briony.

Access

The MSC successfully administered another season of Witels bookings with the solid help of Dorothea Augustine. The club dealt with an incident of assault on Pierre Hoffa. The MSC also laid out a new, clear Zuurberg Access policy for the Mountain Club of South Africa. This came about after meetings with the MCSA, which strengthened relations between us. The MSC Committee also responded the next day to a proposal for settlement of servitude for access to Zuurberg. We still await a response to our return-proposal. The UCT lawyers have pushed the date back to allow the other party another month to reply, although they are prepared to force the issue through the Supreme Court if needed. Waaihoek leadership was also granted to deserving applicants, allowing them to lead snow trips to Zuurberg property.

Conservation

David Acott as Conservation Convenor last year, led and arranged equipment for three separate work parties. The aim is to rebuild the path leading from the Witels out of "Adderley Street" which has been closed to public access for several years. Long weekends were exploited and many members assisted in the proper rebuilding of most of the steep, difficult section. We have tried to maintain ties with the Working for Water project that did much pine hacking for the club in 1998. There is once again a "helicopter hack" planned for after the November exams.

Huts

Alan Matthews, as Huts Convenor, did a fabulous job of arranging maintenance of the huts on Zuurberg despite having a

major work-party become a skiing weekend. This included varnishing decks, and replacing panels of roofing on Mamamcos hut, the highest of the three.

Skiing

This year saw the best snow in several years and so about 36 members managed to take advantage of the snow in the Hex River Mountains, on several trips. The club had to deal with an accident needing helicopter evacuation and a successful evaluation of the incident occurred with the MCSA Search and Rescue Team. There was much skiing, snowboarding and tobogganing in August. We usually get our best snows in September and have arranged trips in the holidays. Hopefully it will snow some more!

Library

The Secretary, Robyn Cullis, maintains a library of journals, magazines, guidebooks and novels of mountaineering excursions. This was utilised to find route descriptions of peaks summited in the Drakensberg, and to plan the club's meets further abroad. Members requested a book by Joe Simpson, which was acquired. This unique facility was far better utilised in 1999 and we intend to keep expanding the collection. Members MUST USE THIS RESOURCE!

Student leaders

The MSC has been quite involved with student leadership on campus in 1999. We had members on the SASSU Executive and three committee members represented SASSU on Student Parliament.

Finances:

The 1998/1999 was fairly accurate on most things. We spent on long-term investments such as sweatshirts for the next five years, and still managed to stay well within our budget. The treasurer, Keith Forbes, did a splendid job of managing transactions such as the funding of courses, expeditions, hikes, development expenditure, equipment for path building trips and maintenance costs of huts. The MSC was able to offer sponsorship to applicants for expeditions of the 2000 holiday and also endorsed members applying for the Student Travel Fund.

Competitions:

SASSU National Tournament:

This year, for the first time in years, the club sent teams to the SASSU National Sport Climbing Competition. Keith Forbes of UCT won the competition. Our team members excelled and were declared overall winners.

Boland Hike 90:

This year we had a mixed team participating in the Boland Hike 90 Competition. The organisers rejected our men's team (in fear I think), but we'll try again next year. Well done to the team that found the going tough!



This year the MSC won the Sports Club of the Year Award at the UCT Sports

Awards Dinner, as well as an award for administration. I thoroughly enjoyed the last four years of the MSC and all the fun that goes with the activities. I encourage you to participate actively to build the MSC as a mountaineering (and skiing, and social) club.

Thank you!

Ianni Vamvadelis
Chairman

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Mountain & Ski club is fortunate to be one of the wealthier clubs at UCT. This means that the club often *does* have the funds to support and initiate many exciting ventures.

The club has three funds to draw from. The combined Special and Grant Account is used for general spending. The 1998 / 1999 committee spent R35 000 of this money over the year, leaving R12 000 unspent. The Witels Account is used for maintenance of UCT's Zuurberg property. Over the year, R12 000 of this money was used, leaving R32 000 in the account. The Investment Account is to be used to fund a large project every few years. This fund was untouched, and currently stands at around R39 000.

The story of the spending really began in O-week, when we (the committee) collected R35 000 from our members, which turned out to be almost exactly what we spent during the year.

Last year's journal was an enormous success, thanks to Olly. He managed to obtain outside funding (through advertising and a journal grant) to cover the bulk of the costs.

We began the year by purchasing R7 000 of superb quality sweaters to last the club for the next few years. The 1999 T-shirts which where bought for O-week and heavily subsidised by the club were quickly sold.

The 1998 Cocktail Party was the most costly ever — though definitely worth the expense! The club continued this trend of sponsoring its members drinking habits by laying on the Cheese & Wine Party (a.k.a. the Wine & Wine Party), the Decathlon and the Barn Dance.

New ropes, belay devices and harnesses to the value of R3 300 were purchased for our equipment store. Jamie also bought new holds as more anchors were added to the vertical climbing wall.

Briony made good use of her Education & Development budget, spending R3 000 on transport for development meets and providing subsidies to send some of our members on a first aid course.

The club has a bolting fund that sponsors the equipping of sport climbing routes. Jayson Orton used this fund to equip an entire new crag, named Mystery, at Montagu with easy to moderately graded routes.

The club sponsored drivers R100 each for the July vac meets. Non-driver participants were each given R50.

Alan and David used the Witels funds for financing path building, pine hacking, petrol and unfortunately to pay Pierre Hoffa's medical bills, after he was attacked on our property.

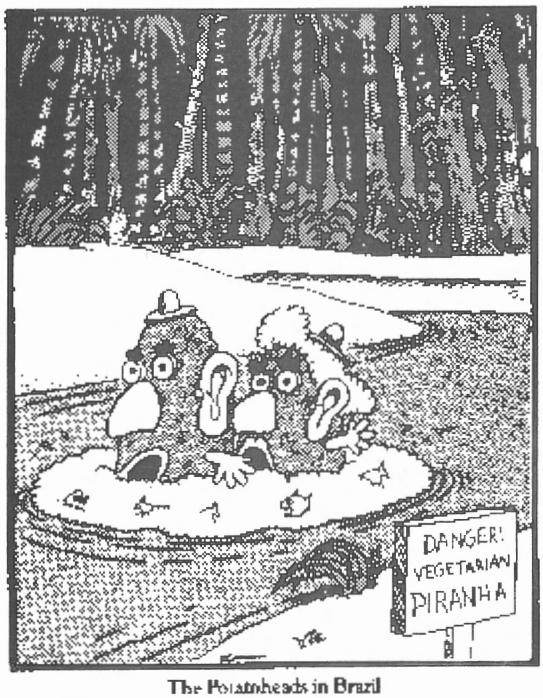
I would like to encourage the 1999/2000 committee to make the club members' money work for them, rather than letting it accumulate unused in the accounts!

Keith Forbes
Treasurer

ZUURBERG REPORT

Zuurberg: *Defn.* Several thousand hectares of land in the South of the Hex River Mountains, which UCT owns and which is administered by this club.

The activities of our club, began this year (1998/1999) in the Hex, with another successful season of Witels kloofing. Perhaps it was too successful as there is noticeable evidence of the large numbers of people going down the kloof. To keep this under control we had a few policing parties, making our presence felt and reporting back on any irregularities.



The Potatoheads in Brazil

While we do minor damage to the kloof today, we attempt to correct the damage done in the past by clearing the alien pines. Thanks to David Acott, and his intrepid Hackers, as well as the working for water people who were probably there somewhere, whether we like it or not.

Much more efficient at clearing than us, with our sweat and saws, was the fire that swept from the North earlier this year. Unfortunate but inevitable, and forgivable since it did not start on our land.

After Summer came the predestined Winter, and with the Winter came the rain and snow. These icy, snow conditions lead to one disastrous weekend with widespread loss of blood, and the helicopter removal of one, now recovered, young man with several broken bones (I trust this is covered elsewhere in the journal). This accident led to a valuable, general mountain safety meeting. Another sub-optimal, result of the winter was the heavy rain, which lent the rivers strength to wash away part of the road to Waaihoek, stranding our erstwhile chairman and colleagues. They managed to get home

and the road has been repaired by Fanie Griesel, one of the helpful farmers.

There has been continued legal difficulty with the access to Waaihoek, which I am not qualified to comment on. And through all of this our three huts have remained standing, with final touches being made to the repairs of Pells, continued maintenance of Hoare and progress on the upgrade of Mamacos.

At this point I should point out that while all of the above did happen, all I really did during the year was guard the many files pertaining our piece of mountain.

James Taylor
Zuurberg Convenor

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Orientation Week

The Education and Development Subcommittee again organised a survey, giving feedback about why students join the club, what their needs are, as well as new ideas for the club. Carel Haumann ran a Beginners Introduction to Climbing Course, which was well supported and allowed beginner climbers to get the hang
of climbing before setting out on club climbing meets.



First Aid

During the second semester of this year, 12 UCT students completed an outdoor focused level 1 first aid course run by MediTech. The course is fully recognised by the Heart Foundation of SA and the SA Resuscitation Council. This course has equipped more of the club's members with first aid knowledge and skills that can be used when out hiking, climbing and skiing.

Following this course, the club first aid boxes have also been restocked. Since then, the hikes' convenor and the climbs' convenor have been loaning the boxes to the leaders of club meets. This has enabled minor injuries to be handled effectively.

The Mountain Walking Leadership Course was not run this year. Hopefully in the coming year, the club can make use of the talented and experienced club members to run a course that will equip students with leadership skills and knowledge.

Outreach

We continued our involvement with the LEAF (Leadership, Education and Advan cement Foundation) College of Commerce and Engineering. LEAF College helps underprivileged black post-matric students to gain entry to Commerce and Engineering Faculties at universities and technikons. Many of



these students are unfamiliar with hiking and nature conservation.

A slide show presentation was organized at the beginning of the year, giving an introduction to the mountains of the Cape Peninsula. We scheduled 5 hiking meets (unfortunately one meet was cancelled due to the tornado) and an introduction to climbing this year. Prior to each hike, the leader met with the students at LEAF College to discuss the route planned for the hike as well as equipment required. A committee was elected to co-ordinate the organisation of their own snacks from the college. The college has had rucksacks, hiking boots and waterbottles donated to them to make use of when hiking. The committee also facilitated the loaning of this equipment. The hikes have been successful this year and provided an opportunity for the LEAF students to meet both UCT students and some of the many international students who are studying at UCT. There were also opportunities for conservation awareness to be discussed.

Three LEAF students completed the outdoor first aid course. They enjoyed the course and since then have ensured that at least one of them is present on the LEAF hikes.

The students asked whether there was someone in the club who could teach them how to climb. Because of limited equipment, our climbs convenor was only able to take 4 students climbing on one of the club climbing meets in the Silvermine area. This was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone and hopefully can be continued next year to introduce more of the students to climbing.

The club has continued its involvement with LEAF College to support and encourage LEAF students to lead hikes. Unfortunately, these students are only at the college for a year before going to either university or technikon. The skills that they learn during the courses and hikes will hopefully give them the confidence to join hiking clubs at the tertiary institutions where they will be continuing their studies.

In Conclusion

The Education and Development portfolio has had a successful and active year. There is scope for the creativity and involvement of all of our club members. So if you have any new ideas that will lead to the development of the club, then contact David Glass the new Education and Development Officer.

Briony Parkes
Education and Development Officer

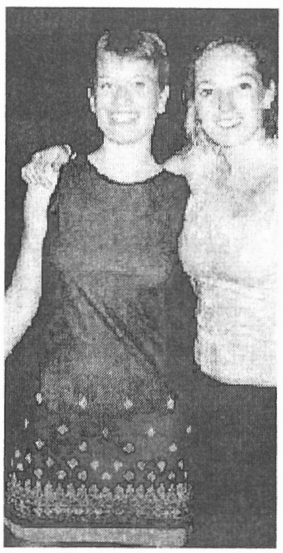
In the end we will conserve only what we love. We'll love only what we understand and we will understand only what we have been taught. – Native American saying

Socials Report

The year's socials ranged in content and style, taking armchair (wooden bench / tabletop) travellers to fantastical destinations and inspiring many. In organising them I certainly learnt far more about the internal workings of UCT than I ever wanted to know, and spent far more time than is healthy listening to tinkly telephone music (damn that Greensleeves tune) ... but overall (and with a couple of months' perspective!) it was good fun and I enjoyed the job.

Highlights of the year, excluding the three parties, have to be Warwick's Antarctica show, complete with props and awesomely timed to music; Jamie and Keith's Decathlon, which provided much amusement for the sober, non-testosterone-driven spectators and judges; Dave and Paul's Quiz, which was waaay high-tech and their "The Year In Pictures", which was just amazing. But all the shows were fascinating and it was good to see a regular crowd develop. Wednesday socials got a lot more sociable towards the end of the year and I urge members to support them and get to know more people in the club.

The parties were cool. A beautiful moon rising and view of Cape Town lights added some magic to the Cheese and Wine, while the wine provided the more concrete bewitching. I was impressed with a certain committee member's eloquence in French that had never surfaced without the aid of party paraphernalia. The Barn Dance was its usual riot, but then I have a weakness for swinging my "pardner" around the room. The Cocktail Party took an amazing amount of phone-calls to secure a venue after trashing yet another sportsclub, I wish Cath all the luck in the world (and some anonymity) for arranging next year's "21st". Unfortunately I wasn't able to be at the party, (Mauritius called ...) but judging by the photos and slides, the Godfather would have been proud and it went well enough not to be remembered by those present. Thanks for an excellent year!



Alex Brooke
Socials' Convenor 1999

The Brits Invade South Africa

Mark Johnston's Holiday Tales

Written by the Man himself!

"Ben, telephone!" exclaims Jeremy Samson. Ben Bransby groans, rolls over, and attempts to force his eyes open. Suddenly it occurs to him that he's in the middle of the Cederberg, Spout Cave in fact, and there are no telephones or cell reception for miles. "Bollocks, boffing boffness.." mumbles Ben, and slumps back onto his Thermarest where he lies snoring for the next half hour before Jeremy thrusts a mug of super concentrated coffee into his hands and starts giving details of the day's climbing objectives.

Ben Bransby was one of the group of British climbers who visited South Africa during October and November as part of the British Mountaineering Council's joint trad climing meet with the Mountain Club of South Africa. I was lucky enough to join them on their two week road trip during which we visited some of the top trad climbing venues in the Western Cape.

While in the UK, Jeremy had enticed the Brits with stories of sunny blue skies and short walk-ins, and blissfully unaware of his reputation for being a sandbagger of note, they had stupidly believed him. On arrival in Cape Town, they were immediately ushered up Table Mountain, and braved an appalling gale-force southeaster to tick off some of the classics. After they had thawed out, they headed for Lion's Head Granite, where Jeremy managed to get them on some of the harder routes by convincing them that even though there didn't *appear* to



be any handholds, the routes were in fact surprisingly easy. Not!

After this short stint in Cape Town, it was time to start our road trip. The weather did not seem to be improving, and a series of cold fronts were predicted for the next few days. Despite this, spirits were high and everybody was looking forward to some big wall cranking in Du Toit's Kloof, our first destination. I was to travel with the Brits in their rented VW microbus, and was instantly declared official guide to driver Andy MacNae. Andy reminded me of Homer Simpson, except he drank more beer and snored more loudly. He was also an exceptionally bad driver, and he drove the poor bus like a taxi driver on acid, while the rest of us sat wide-eyed and clinging on for dear life. There was some initial confusion due to the fact that the Poms had never heard of robots. Andy drove straight through an intersection when I had specifically told him to turn left at the robots. Apparently in England they call them traffic lights, or something. Absurd!

We somehow arrived in one piece at the MCSA hut in Du Toit's Kloof, and once the tourists had acquainted themselves with the local wildlife (baboons, spiders,

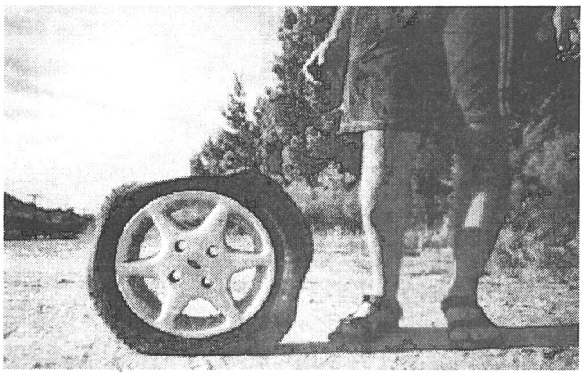
etc), we headed off to Hellfire Crag. Hellfire is notorious for living up to its name, and many a climber has contracted heat stroke at this crag. Ironically we found ourselves shivering with cold, and only managed to wobble up a couple of routes before heading back to the hut as the first raindrops began to fall.

We woke up the next morning to what was to become a familiar sound on the trip: rain. Determined to do some climbing, we decided to drive to Montagu, which is normally dry when it is raining everywhere else. Sure enough it was perfectly dry, although a little windy, and we headed for Bad Kloof, home to some of the more famous Montagu test-pieces. Excitedly I began showing them my favorites, however, much to my surprise, they seemed completely indifferent to these, and soon hauled out their trad gear and began opening up their own new routes next to the bolted lines!

The next two days were cold, but not wet, and we managed to do some more climbing in the Du Toit's Kloof region. Our team was joined by David Davies and Tony Dick, who took a party up "Apollo" (22) on Castle Rocks near Ceres. Dave Turnbull and I enjoyed a pleasant ascent of "Exposure in F Major" (18) on the Witteberg, and Snort Edelstein took a party up the imposing Yellowwood Amphitheatre, where Dave Birkett did a very impressive onsight lead of the heinous crux pitch of "Armageddon Time Direct" (26).

Next we headed back to Montagu where we planned to do some climbing at the Lost World Crag. Mary Jenner was leading this section, and she turned out to be a first-class caterer. (Her muffins were particularly yummy). At Lost World both Ben Bransby and Dave Birkett onsighted "Technicolour Darkness" (26), and ascents were also made of the classics "Nuclear Waste" (20) and "Titanium Trip" (24). Perhaps one of the most impressive ascents of the trip was Steve Mayers' onsight trad lead of the bolted route "Mischief and Thuggery" (27) in Oorlogskloof – remarkable!

At times it seemed as if the Brits were more interested in opening their own new routes than doing the established ones. Once Ben was satisfied that he'd ticked off the Lost World classics, he set about finding a new line for himself. He soon spotted a horrible, dirty, mossy-looking chimney which, surprise, surprise, was not recorded in the guidebook. So with Debbie Birch he ascended the now infamous "Chimney of Boff" (apparently 18), which surprisingly saw a number of repeat ascents. As the next cold front started moving in, we began the long journey to



our final destination – the Cederberg – where we planned to climb at the mega-classic venues, Tafelberg and Wolfberg.

Driving into the Cederberg in the pouring rain was truly a mind-jolting experience. Andy was completely mad,

and as he careered down the treacherous gravel passes with that crazed expression in his eyes, I began to wonder why I hadn't chosen a safer holiday option, such as hand-feeding piranhas, or shooting buffalo with a bow and arrow. Andy was firmly under the impression that the best off-road vehicle was in fact a rented car, and one of the team members even suggested that he was a crash test dummy trying to get his revenge on the human race! As we skidded our way through the Cederberg, our formerly white VW became almost completely caked in mud. This provided the perfect canvas for budding artists Nick and Jim, who inscribed "Help, mad driver!" and "Death Wagon!" on the now brown windows.

We arrived at Welbedacht, the start of the walk up to Tafelberg and played soccer beneath the oak trees while we waited for the others to collect the permit. I was having serious doubts about the walk to Spout Cave – it was still raining intermittently, and dark grey clouds clung ominously to the surrounding peaks. The Brits, however, seemed unperturbed by the rain, and were keen to get walking as soon as possible. So off we went, and soon the squelching of my soaking boots was drowned out by the singing and joking of the rest of the team. A now familiar thought bounced into my head: "These guys are complete nutters."

Three cold, wet hours later we arrived at Spout Cave. Luckily the roof of the cave did not collapse after Peter's head had a rather unfortunate meeting with it, and we all snuggled into our sleeping bags and went to sleep... the South Africans, that is. The Poms, foolishly believing Jeremy that the South African summer was warm, had all brought their thinnest sleeping bags, and consequently had something of an unpleasant night. The team, looking a little worse for wear the next morning, exclaimed that they had had enough and that they wanted to go somewhere warm and sunny... "like Manchester". Andy MacNae claimed that he had had one of the coldest nights ever, insisting that if he wasn't still glowing with sunburn, he would have succumbed to hypothermia and died. Ben, rushing back in after taking a leak, described the ambient temperature outside the cave as "positively Baltic". He vowed not to drink anything else that day as this would mean that he wouldn't have to venture out of the cave again to wee.

And so we settled down to wait out the storm. Clouds continued to billow right into the cave, and the temperature did not seem to be on the increase. My mind wandered to stories I'd heard of Tafelberg being blanketed in snow in summer, and I began to believe them. The Brits maintained morale by singing, telling jokes and playing a variety of games introduced to us by Andy, who had spent many days holed up in snow caves during Himalayan expeditions. Ken invented a fun game called "How I Lost My Virginity", and after excitedly telling us his story, became somewhat embarrassed when he realized that nobody else had any intention of sharing theirs.

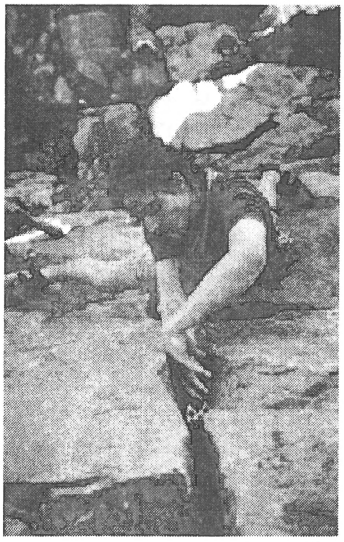
The next morning was clear, albeit still a little "Baltic", and after being stuck in the cave for over 24 hours, we were all raring to go. Peter Robbins and I teamed up and had a magnificent day on the rock. We warmed up on "Oscillation" (21), a classic route on the Spout with

some tricky face moves which Peter breezed through still wearing his trainers! Then we moved on to some harder stuff, and after onsight soloing the standard route on the Pillar Box (about 18), we ascended the beautiful, clean arete on its SE corner (25), which for me was one of the highlights of the trip.. After that we climbed the impressive "Oceans of Air" (23), an "out there" route that goes through the roof system opposite Spout Cave. We then opened a new route on the face right and below the cave, which although short (only a single pitch), was really exciting and involved pulling through a small roof and then ascending a technical face, all on superb rock.

The other climbers also had a really productive day, with a magnificent new route (about 27) being opened by Ben Bransby and Dave Birkett just left of Tinie Versveld's "Blue Planet" (25). Tinie and Steve Mayers also did a direct finish to "Blue Planet". As yet another cold front moved in we headed down from Tafelberg to our last destination: Wolfberg.

At Wolfberg we were joined by a number of Cape Town climbers, including the legendary Andrew de Klerk and Chris Lomax. We had planned to camp that evening, but due to the inclement weather decided at the last minute to spend the night in one of the bungalows instead. When Jeremy woke us up the next morning saying that it had snowed, I thought it was merely another one of his attempts to get us out of bed. The other members of the Kindergarten (the name given to the room where Ben, Peter and I were sleeping) also dismissed Jeremy's statement as bollocks, and we all ignored his incessant chatter until another more credible member of the team came and confirmed the report. Come to think of it, it was a tad nippy, so I jumped out of bed and dashed outside. Sure enough, all the mountains around us were shivering under a generous dusting of snow.

That day will be remembered as one of the coldest climbing days ever. Many of the Brits had done winter climbing in Scotland or the Alps, and yet they still insisted that they had never been so cold. All the routes that we climbed that day had snow and ice on them. Dave Birkett and I whimpered up the wicked "Energy Crisis" (20) and in places the rock was so icy that I wished I had brought my crampons with me. Across from us, Ken and Nick were whining up "Celestial Journey" (22), and I could hear Ken's cries as he dodged falling icicles.



The next day it warmed up slightly, and Jeremy and Ben opened a superb 26 variation to "Wolfgang". Ben also onsight soloed "Energy Crisis". The rest of the team, still fearing frostbite, chose to climb at Krom River Crag, where they did some notable onsights, and opened some new lines (all on trad gear, of course). That evening Ed February's wife Nicky prepared a wonderful potjie, and then we all sat together around the final campfire listening as the Brits

shared their remarkable stories of vomiting birds and crags that had fallen down.

Climbing with the British team was a remarkable experience. These climbers are at the cutting edge of British trad climbing; some of them even up there with the best in the world. They opened my eyes to the world of hard, bold trad leads: scaling a difficult rock-face but leaving no trace of your endeavor. Before the trip I considered grade 20 the ceiling of my trad climbing goals. Since then I've led routes right into the mid-twenties.

Sport climbing is fun, accessible and relatively safe. But I feel that people who climb exclusively on bolts are limiting their experience of climbing.

When I look back on my (brief!) climbing career, the things which stand out most are not my hardest sport leads or boulder problems, but my most enjoyable trad climbs. For me it's these experiences which make climbing such an integral and beautiful part of my existence.

In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous – Aristotle

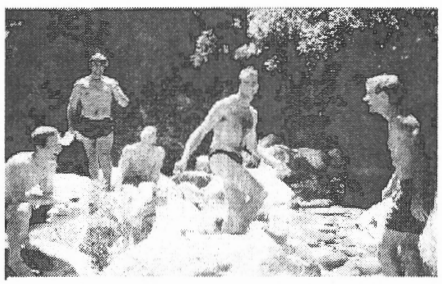
Wolraad's Wet'n Wild Witels

9 – 13 February 1999

Wolraad Euvrard

Leader: Ianni Vamvadelis

The Witels is a pristine river that carves its way through the Hex River Mountains on UCT property. It is also often referred to as the Otter Trail of the Cape. Personally, I have never taken part in a more splendid hike that I can remember – I went once before in 1996, before I came to UCT and so naturally I jumped at the opportunity of going again.



We departed on Tuesday at midday with our full group of eight members. The way into the splendor of the kloof is blocked by a rather large mountain, which of course we had to cross. Our grueling ascent can be summed up by a few highly appropriate words found on a plaque halfway up, and which should be inscribed into the memory of every self-respecting club member.

Our most treasured stop was at Middle Pool, where one can see two beautiful and rare species of disa. Once up the mountain, we were graced with a spectacular view of the valley below with a wondrous sunset for a backdrop. Our first night was spent in Hoare Hut, the Ritz Hotel of all mountain huts. This being my first trip up to the hut I was eager to try out the legendary toilet, which boasts a pair of skis for your feet and the most awesome

view I have ever seen while perched on a similar device!

After a night free of encounter with Rastus, the resident rat, we made our way down into the kloof, which took another half day. Once in the kloof, we marveled at the clarity of the water and the size of the pools. We were all loath to continue and Ianni had to coax us, telling us there was plenty more where this came from, or rather went to. Our modes of transport included bouldering, wading and swimming – yes, we had to float our packs in the water and swim 200 meters sometimes. The first day of kloofing entailed four swims, the most spectacular of which was Tunnel Swim. Tunnel Swim is so named because the kloof walls overlap and give the sensation of being in subterranean caves – real Camel Man stuff!

Our second night was spent at Camp Sandy, a beautiful site. As the name implies, it is situated on a sandbank, making it ideal to sleep on, but less than comfortable in the face of tearing winds. The following morning we came to the conclusion that the Sandman must have been somewhat overzealous with his duties.

That day, we had a midmorning stop at Jeff's (or should I rather say Brett's) Pool. As it turned out one of our party members had an insatiable appetite for young damsels, and thus it was that he took to the waters in the guise of a friendly Nile crocodile to stalk his prey. Thanks to Brett and Jocelyn for that humorous enactment.

Lunch-time at the Alder Ring left the majority of our party passed out on the rocks, exhausted form the morning's leisurely stroll. This camp site marks the emergency exit form the kloof via Adderley Street and the Fresher's Country Meet site. The late afternoon brought us past a series of swims again and we made excellent use of Adriano's car tube to sample some of the rapids along the way. Our mode of negotiating swims with our packs was to pile them up on two lilos. These often teetering loads were ferried to the far side with the occasional disaster. As the majority of the swims were carved out of steep rock faces, this provided an ideal location for climbing practice on otherwise inaccessible cliffs. Just after Swim 4, we reached our camp for the night, Breakfast or Whiskey, and not a moment too soon as the kloof was already in the evening shadow and we were freezing! We scattered ourselves around and after supper and a truly legendary fruitcake and custard, courtesy of Brett, we turned in for the night.

Early the next morning we set out early to avoid the heat of the sun, following the meandering path of the river. By midday the heat had become so intense that we could not walk on and it was with glee that we found the Lunch Pool, with its protective shade off to the side of the river. Lunch Pool marks one of the final pools on the Zuurberg UCT property and the remainder of the trail is through the Ceres Mountain Fynbos Reserve. Once the heat had subsided to bearable levels we set out down the river, passing the last two out of fourteen glorious swims. With the last of the afternoon sun caressing us, we admired some San paintings in the shelter of a cave. They are still in remarkable condition, considering the kloof floods every winter. From the cave it was a short stroll to Stony Camp, where our

third night was spent. It was here that someone remembered a deck of cards they had brought along and so the evening was spent playing Arsehole.

The last day of the trail twists and turns along the Witels, before reaching the Breede River into which "our" river flows. We stopped for a swim and a rest at Boulder Pool, with an eponymous boulder protruding from the center much like a giant marble. This lent itself to some excellent bouldering. We soon pushed on, eager to reach our lunch spot, Bumslide Pool. Large, incredibly smooth slabs slant into the water and provide hours of amusement when wet. We soon retired into whatever shade we could find to escape the sun. And so that most spectacular of trails came to an end as we walked the final steps to the Breede and were picked up by Ianni and Adriano who had run ahead to collect the cars.

In retrospect, a truly fitting way to spend a week and round off the summer vacation is to experience one of the jewels the Club has to offer. I find myself already looking forward to next year's trip, which I know I will be on.

Little Lion's Head Sundowners

17 February 1999

Taryn Smart

Leader: Adriano Iorio

Probably the highlight of my registration week at UCT was the day I stumbled upon the Mountain and Ski Club stall. My second day at UCT: first year, lonely, lost and still baffled by curriculum advisors, Beattie buildings and registration.

The next thing I knew I had a harness around my waist and was being pointed towards THE WALL. I protested saying I had never done anything remotely similar and my big toes were definitely not muscular enough, but I didn't have much sympathy, and soon I found myself clinging like a desperate rock spider half way up and not going further.

So that is how I joined the club, and that evening went up Little Lion's Head with the group for Sundowners. The walk up

was easy until we hit some rocky bits which made me glad I had practiced on THE WALL. Once we reached the top we chose our rocks, whipped out the sandwiches, castles, grapes, sherry and watched the last of the light as it tickled the sea.

Getting down was quick, aided by a gale force wind which blew some of the lighter ones over a few times.

Good conversation, great people. I'm looking forward to the adventures to come. Oh and THE WALL, I tried again and I conquered it. With a little help from my friends!

All travellers in warm countries should take the precaution of taking a drop of brandy before drinking any cold water when they are hot and perspiring. - Otto Mentzel, advice after summiting Table Mountain at 7am in 1730 with slaves carrying boiled hams, roast legs of mutton, corned beef, rolls and butter

A Trip Down Suicide Gorge

Tuesday 2 March 1999

Andy Louis

Leader: David Acott

While the rest of UCT was either taking the day off or selling RAG mags, the more adventurous students decided on a day in the mountains. The Hottentots Holland Mountains (near Grabouw) were chosen, as this is where Suicide Gorge is to be found. Why such an awful name? We were soon to find out!

We left at the crack of dawn, just as the birdies were starting to tweet, and just as the poor 1st years in res were being woken up to go sell Sax Appeal. After an easy walk to the start of the gorge, we prepared for the cold by a dip in one of the top pools. Another group (from Cape Tech) were also going down the gorge after us. We started descending into the gorge, the walls becoming increasingly taller, and the water becoming increasingly colder (except for the bright ones who had wetsuits!).

After going as far as possible without getting wet, we came to the first part where you have to jump into the pool below. Wow but the water was ultra freezing! It was a semi-overcast day, which did not make things any easier. Just as you'd warmed up from the last jump/swim, you'd have to walk/wade your way through the river to the next jump, get wet again, then jump, all the way down the gorge. The highest jump was said to be around 9m. That's a lot of flying time! To be exact, it's around

three seconds, and at the point of impact with the water you're doing around 50km/h!

Now there are right and wrong ways to attempt jumps this height. The golden rule is to jump straight, arms by your side and body vertical, so as to avoid any nasty belly-flops or robot-red arms. You can even do this with style, as James showed us, by adding twirls, twists and other weird performances on the way down. Before starting out we all waterproofed everything inside our bags. Dave had a real hard time keeping his precious camera dry and in one piece. He lowered his bag down every single waterfall, while the rest of us chucked our bags over and watched them hit the water with a very impressive splosh!

We had lunch at the junction of Suicide and Riviersonderend gorge. Thank goodness the sun came out! The goose bumps quickly disappeared. The topic of why it's called "Suicide" Gorge came up for discussion. Dave pointed out that a number of people had been killed attempting to go down and up the gorges. And so it's considered "suicidal" to do what we were doing. Oh. Well we were all OK. Those that had died were freak occurrences where the dudes had been under-prepared and had made

unwise decisions, which had cost them their lives. Hmm, food for thought....

After a hearty and surprisingly dry lunch we headed up the next gorge. This wasn't as fun as the going down part – more work going uphill, especially the swimming parts. A lot of boulder-hopping got the blood circulating again. The way out of the gorge was a very steep scramble up the side where the rock faces open out. Then there was the walk along the jeep track back to the car-park. By this time we were all dry and warm again.

So, was it worth braving the ice-cold water, waking up at the crack of dawn, and fighting for a place on the prestigious list of participants? You bet! For a day adventure of note I'd do it any time!

For forty years I lived in the shadow of Table Mountain. It was always there in the background – and I learnt to know it in all its moods. I learnt how to climb its rocks; I followed its rivers; splashed through its mine tunnels; I explored the darkness of its caves; shared their mysteries with the bats; I wandered through the forest picking mushrooms; I admired the floral glory of the mountain; sat on a peak watching an eagle; and saw the cliffs roll by from the cable car... Table Mountain is the symbol of our land.

Jose Burman

A Day of Disas and Black Eagles

Myburgh's Ravine, Table Mountain

2 March 1999

Adriano Iorio

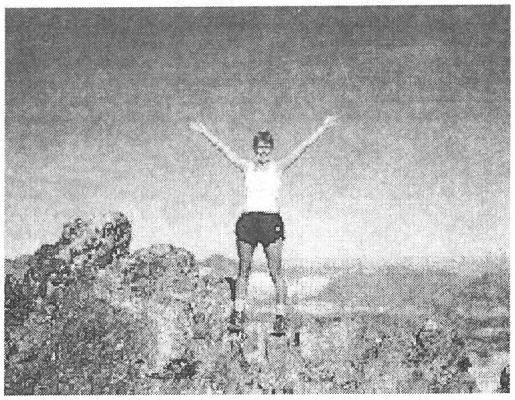
Leader: Adriano Iorio

Sax Appeal Day is always a great opportunity to explore the Mountain, so while others went Suicide Gorging, we went Myburgh Ravine-ing. A fairly large group of UCT diplomats and their international counterparts saw the walk begin from Suikerbossie in slightly overcast conditions.

We headed towards Orange Kloof along a not so well used path. Okay, so maybe you could call it bundu bashing. Amidst all the commotion, our resident botanist, Dave, kept us well informed the *whole* way of what flora we were passing through. So much so that for the day we were local fundi's of our indigenous vegetation!

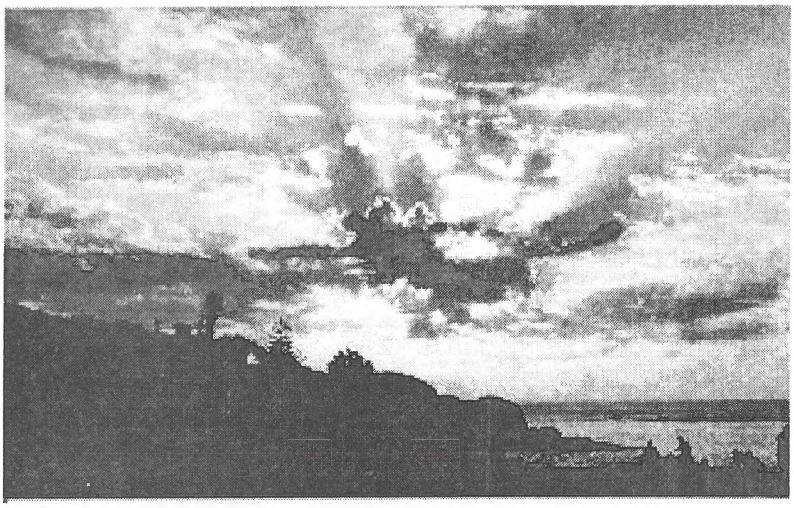
Myburgh's is famous for the *n* amounts of disas that can be found along the kloof on the back of Table Mountain. The spectacular display of *Disa uniflora* and *Disa grandiflora* clustered together at the waterfall was a sight to behold.

Once we had emerged from the Ravine we sauntered across the top of the mountain towards Judas Peak and Llandudno Ravine. While we lunched at Judas Peak, the clouds parted intermittently yielding breathtaking views of the Table Top and the underlying Karbonkelberg. It was here, when we were doing the recce, that Wolraad and I witnessed the majestic emperors of the skies dutifully keeping watch on the bay below. As we passed by, the Black Eagles soared off into the heavens to take hold of their kingdom. It is on days like these ...

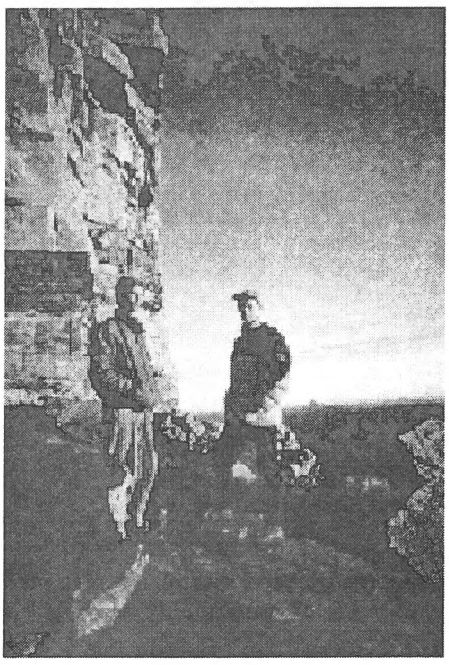




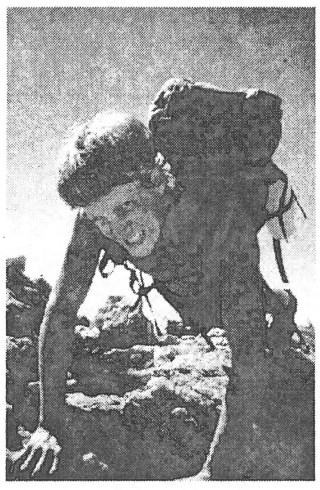


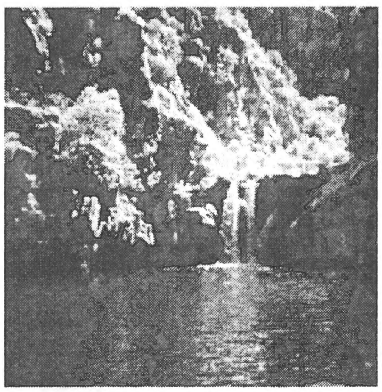






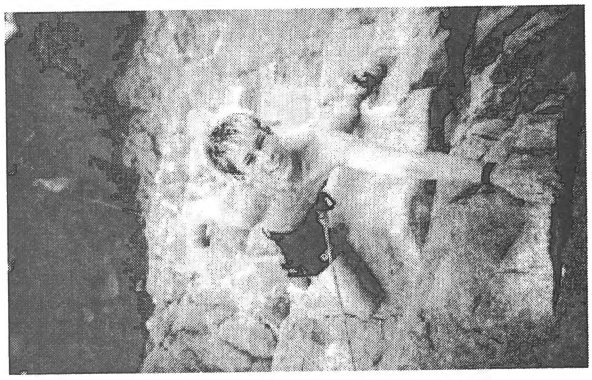




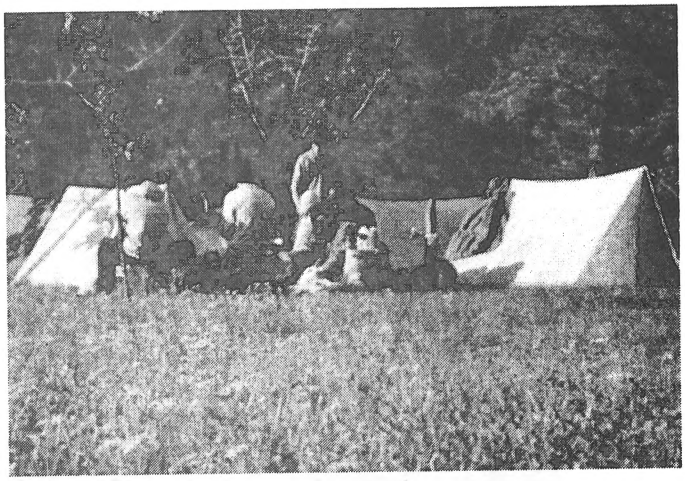


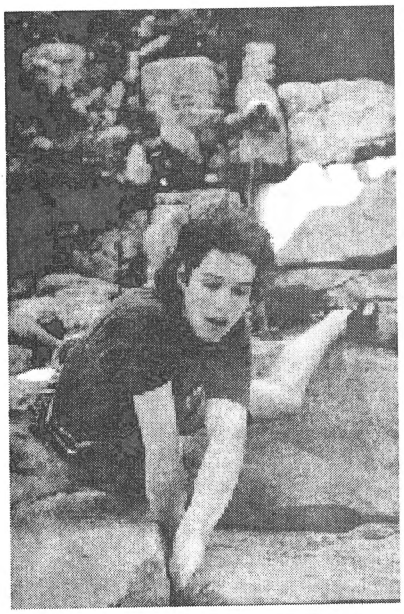
MSC Gallery

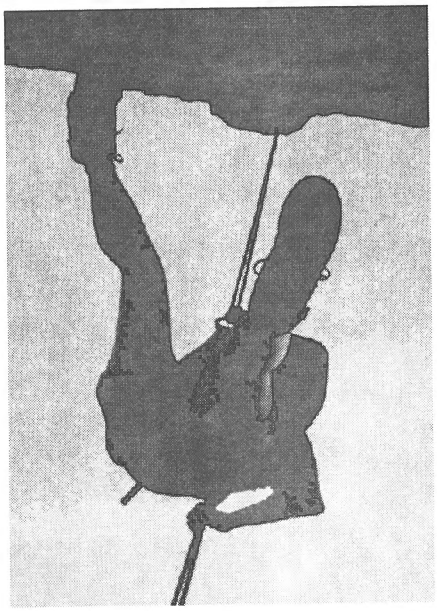


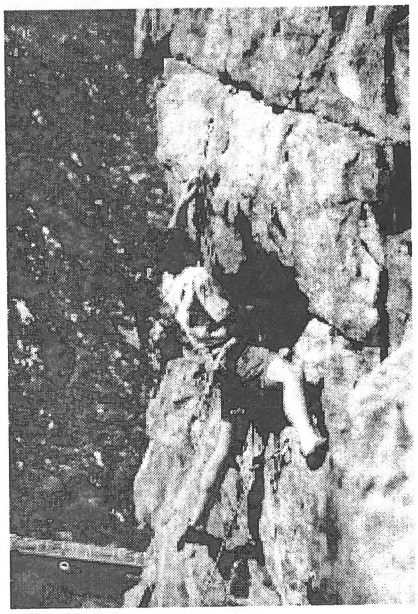


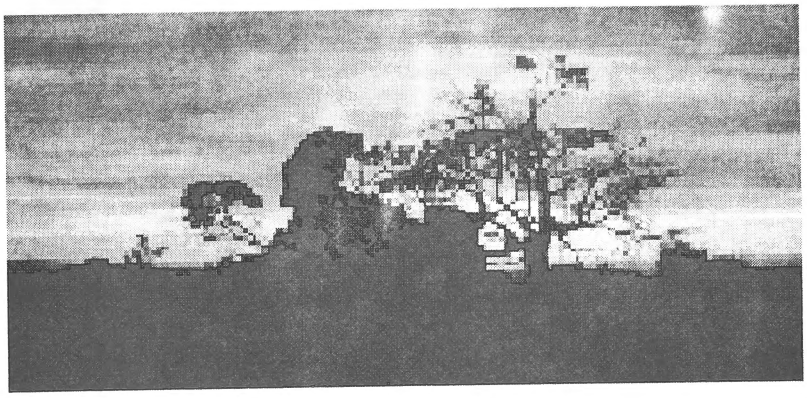


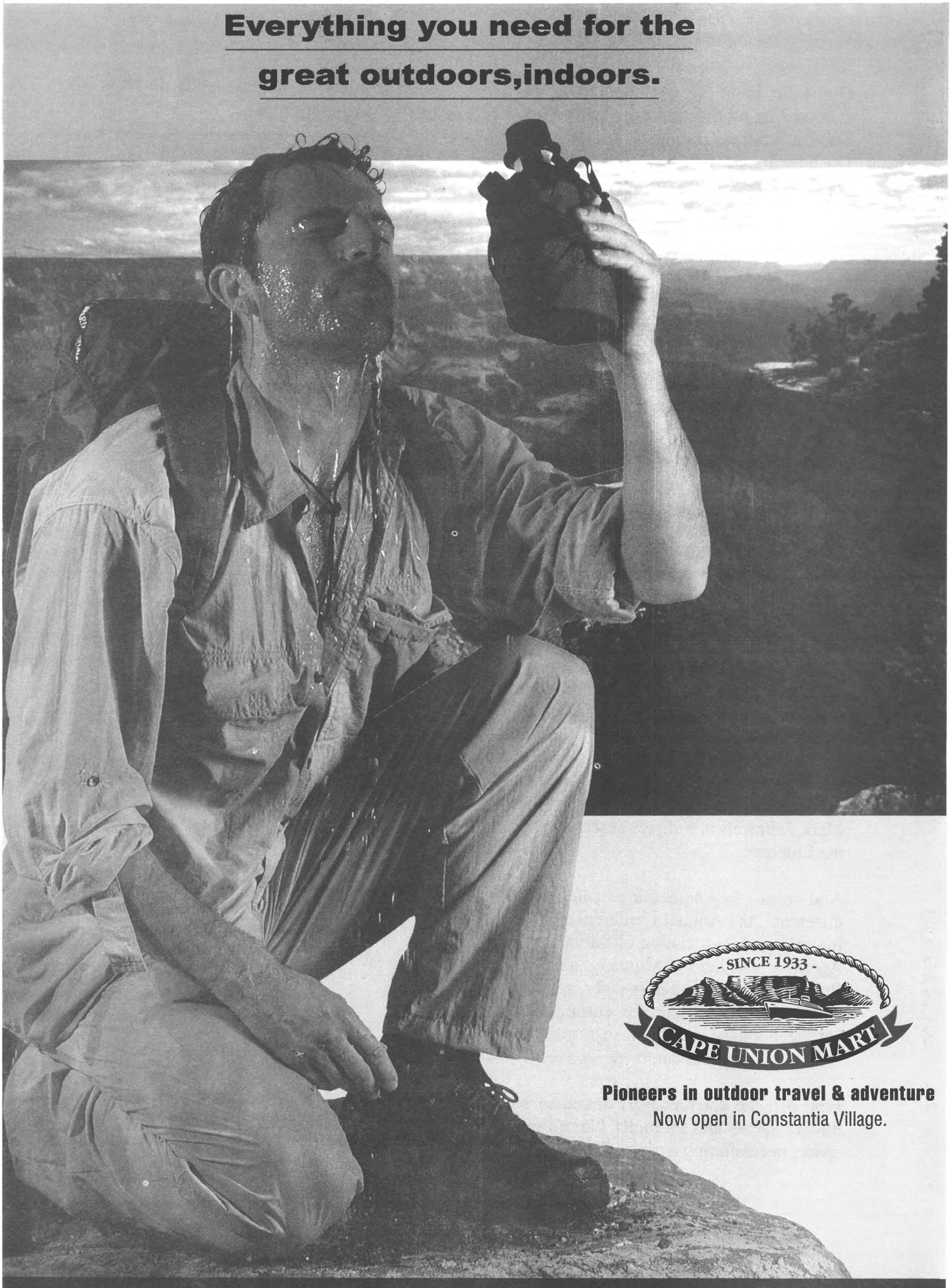











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Our little jaunt up the mountain was followed by a brief descent - being brief only because we ran most of the way. Oh how I long for that sweet smell of buchu on the early evening air blowing through my hair ... hmmm we'll do it again - sometime soon! ☺

Is it so small a thing to have enjoyed the sun,
To have lived light in the spring
To have loved, to have thought, to have done?
- Matthew Arnold, Empedocles on Etna

Spies Like Us

Montagu Climbing Weekend

6 -7 March 1999

Written by: Secret Agent Jocelyn Newmarch
Coordinator and Chairperson: Secret Agent Mark Johnston Group: between 20 and 30 secret agents posing as UCT MSC members

Long, long ago, in a galaxy far, far away, the Empress Wushu Mlinina invented a bold, exciting game which, roughly translated into English, is known as "Ostrich Feathers and Cucumbers". It has been clinically proven that this event was responsible for both the formation of the Spice Girls *and* the destruction of life on Mars. It has absolutely nothing to do with sport-climbing in Montagu, except for the little-known fact that Mark Johnston is a direct descendant of the Empress.

And now for something completely different... the Annual Conference of the International Association of Surveillance Agencies was held in Montagu, a sleepy Boland town more famous for apricots and warm water than for cutting-edge spy technology - which just goes to show - appearances can be deceptive.

First off, the caterers were found to be double agents and promptly blasted into space, necessitating a trip to the friendly Spar to ward off imminent starvation. Trust no one.

Next up was Operation Legoland, which was found to be largely successful in the easier grades and a bit of a butt-kicker for some (eg, the classic Chocolate Speedway, where Agent Jocelyn met her nemesis).



However, it was here that the weekend's first (and surprisingly, the only) casualty was reported: Agent George was betrayed to the enemy forces and dislocated his shoulder. That night, who would have guessed that the seemingly innocent party of MSC climbers were in fact some of the world's finest (and not-so-fine) spies? Austin Powers, eat your heart out.

Sunday morning dawned bright and early, making extravagant promises which it largely kept - though perhaps the cockcrow was a little harsh at that hour. Other people also thought so and strangled the rooster. Apart from this incidental act of violence, the majority

of Conference participants decided they were up to a refresher course in escapology at the Playground, where Fun in the Sun kicked some serious butt - well done to Agent Steve who toproped the route for those less hardcore.

Stressed-out surveillance experts then conducted a demonstration of "Relaxing in the Campsite Pool" and the rest of the group gave a paper on "Eating Lunch". The NIS contingent, however, had to get back to Cape Town in order to file reports on Pagad activities, and so could not join the attack on the Steeple, reputed to be "exciting" by those in the know.

The International Association of Surveillance Agencies did their bit for tourism and rated the Montagu Weekend as "classic... not classified". One other thing about Empress Wushu Mlinina: apparently her pet goldfish was not too keen on climbing, and consequently never went to Montagu. He didn't know what he was missing!

Devil's Peak Ice-Cream Challenge

Sunday 7 March

Robyn Cullis

Leader: David Acott

If you were a zebra on the slopes of Devil's Peak on a hot Sunday in February, you would have been somewhat surprised to see a small group of people, a pool recliner, a beach umbrella, an ironing board, a portable stereo, a Korean flag and two complete tuxedos slowly making their way up to the peak. No, this was not the latest group of squatters looking for a new home with a view, but the annual MSC Devil's Peak Ice-cream Challenge.

The aim of the event is to present a delicious ice- cream treat to the judges on the top of the mountain. As the event always takes place in February, and considering the 2 or 3 hour walk up in the sun (and it was really hot this year), keeping your ice- cream solid is not as easy as it sounds. In fact it is considered an achievement in itself to have anything resembling solid ice- cream once you get to the top. Over the years there have been many different theories on how solidity is best maintained, but only few have perfected the art. In addition to solidity, points are also awarded for presentation, taste and creativity.

This year, the judge, David Acott, set the standard for the competitors, by tacking up a pool recliner, beach umbrella and tuxedo. While reclining in the shade, overlooking Cape Town, he was served by the competitors. In third place was Claire with her offering of a chocolate and vanilla milk-shake. In second place was Barry who produced a creation of strawberry and vanilla ice-cream (remarkably solid) topped with condensed milk in an ice bowl (also solid!). This was all served on a table (the ironing board) covered by a table cloth (the Korean flag). First prize went

in great style to Ben Knights who appeared in a tux, with a menu and classical background music. There was a drink for the judge and a bill and peppermints. The star attraction was a half melon with ice- cream and fruit and chocolate pieces.

Confronting fears in the Kalk Bay Caves:
6 March 1999

Wolraad Euvrard

Leader: Kevin Iles

I have always had a tendency towards claustrophobia, since my early childhood - I still don't know what possessed me to go on this meet. The adventure and challenge were two points that drew me, along with the fact that this is a most unusual way to experience a mountain. The caves themselves form a complex system of tunnels in the lime stone Mountain.

To reach the caves we had to walk a short distance, one that left more than a few of the party short of breath, something that was soon forgotten upon reaching our base camp, Harbour View Cave. We split into two parties and took it in turns to explore a pair of caves. The first on the itinerary was Clovelly, a myriad of low tunnels which fork and twist back on themselves. To begin with, you have to wriggle in on your belly to a cavern from where you continue on all fours. The sense of being in a cave is hard to convey, because one's sense of space changes completely, but as long as the tunnel goes forward and one can move freely, one doesn't feel claustrophobic. It's only when you reach a dead-end and find that there is very little space to turn around and that there are a half a dozen other people behind you that you have to hang on to your rationality. The most amazing part of it all, though is that there is an astoundingly amount to see down there, from spiders, to sand flea-like bugs, to alleged porcupines, which we had the luck not to run into; something Kevin never tired of reminding us about!

Apart from the many amazing features which adorn the cave walls, there are also endless attempts at hieroglyphs, some of which date back to 1935! One of the more breath-taking beauties in the caves, are the droplets of water which have collected like glistening diamond beds on the roofs of caverns. These droplets evaporate, leaving minerals behind, to form crystals.

The following cave was Lower Aladdin, which was basically a steady descent through a series of wet, dripping pitfalls. Just as you thought this was an excuse for a cave, the tricky bit came; a tight spot where you had to manoeuvre your body into positions you never knew you could! (Something that characterised this



trip and caving in general)!

All suitably soaked through, we returned to base camp, to wait for the other party and eat lunch. Both took longer than expected, which didn't perturb anyone, as we occupied ourselves mimicking rock spiders - clambering along the shear rock walls above us. We also spent some time observing the huge veld fire ravaging the Silvermine area.

After we had regrouped, we set off for the last two caves on the itinerary. White Dome is an array of tunnels that does not actually lead anywhere, but is none-the-less exciting to explore. By this stage most of us had overcome our initial claustrophobia enough, to crawl around in a slightly wider formation. At one stage eight of us were all crammed into one smallish cavern, about 2½ m^3 in volume! Now was definitely not the time to start exhaling from bodily orifices! Luckily no one did!

We found many lonely bottles scattered around the caves and Kevin filled us in, that MSC members are not the only ones to go caving, but that some homeless people also seek refuge here in the winter months.

Finally we entered Boomslang, a spectacular cave that actually has different exit and entrance. There are relatively large caverns that allowed us to walk almost all of the way. One cavern had a high ceiling that we were not allowed to shine our torches up into, for fear of being swamped over by bats! It was quite clear from all the litter that this route is rather frequented. Having reached the other side, all that remained was, for us to wait for the other group. Three of us decided to go and further explore the caves at the immediate entrance. We crawled into spaces barely large enough for us to fit into in tunnels that were self-contained. Eventually we were called; the rest had already set of for the car park.

Reflecting on this outing, I am reminded at how much one can achieve, if only one puts ónes mind to the task. I am sure I speak for the party, when I say that we left there with a great sense of fulfilment. I know for sure, that I have conquered one fear in my life and have come away enriched and understanding of that which used to fill me with terror.



Witels Bonanza!

Ruth Woudstra Works the Witels

20 – 22 March

Big Daddy Dave Acott knows how to plan a good party. A good work party, that is. The Witels bonanza was devised with the idea of two groups path-building up Adderly Street and around the Fresher's Hike, and one group doing a three-day trip down the Witels. Ben the Knight was the Man (or is it Ben the Man who was the Knight) that led us over Waaihoek and down into the luscious Witels valley.

To all the first timers, this was a genuine adventure - because getting a bit lost always has the slight element of suspense in it... And if you have ever wanted to see pride, you should have seen the group who missioned up and down Waaihoek Peak in one day and made it alive. Entering into the Witels is entering into an almost subterranean sphere of clear pools and streams and green luscious vegetation that is so beautiful it borders on eerie. The first night was spent at the Disa Falls, which run down the middle of a wide-open fairy-tale storybook setting that makes Benny Boekwurm's one look like a simplified Oxford mini-dictionary. After a good night's sleep (if you were not woken up to join Dave Gwynn-Evans at 3am for a conversation about the deeper things in life) we got up bright and early to do some kloofing.

The kloofing taxi was steered by Dave G on his full-size lilo and driven by various human motors. And that was only *one* of the original manoeuvres to get our goodies across bone dry. After some boulder hopping we reached our destination - a corner in the woods beside the river where the path-builders had already set up camp. The remainder of the day was spent chilling, swimming and playing ha-ha and vegetable games (you couldn't guess what kind of games those would be...). On Sunday, before heading up Adderley Street, some of us helped the path-builders do our bit for conservation. A special mention should go to Gavin the Horse - you have never seen a man carry so many rocks in a backpack - and a seventies backpack with a frame like that!

But what a marvelous long weekend! And best of all is that there are many more work parties (and that implies both working and partying) in the year to come, so join by all means - if only to behold the indescribable splendor that is the Witels. (Oops, I have described it, therefore it cannot be indescribable. However, don't let that stop you from coming!)

Sweet to ride forth at evening from the wells,
When shadows pass gigantic on the sand,
And softly through the silence beat the bells
Along the Golden Road to Samarkand...

For lust of knowing what should not be known,
We take the Golden Road to Samarkand
- James Elroy Flecker, Golden Journey to Samarkand

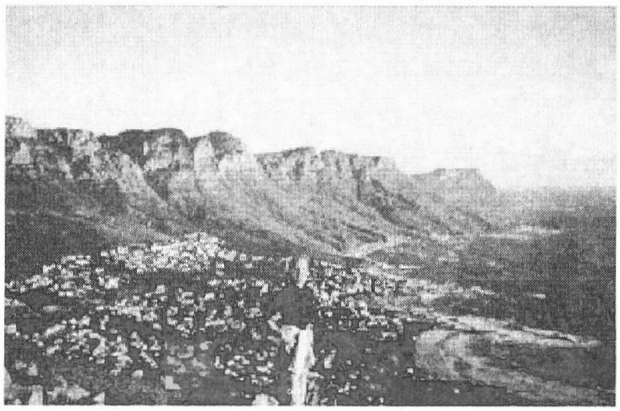
Tranquillity Cracks – Some Table Mountain Secrets

Monday 22 March

Kevin Iles

Leader: Kevin Iles

It was a small, but very enthusiastic group that were awaiting me at the info center on my arrival at campus on a cloudy public holiday. The list on the board had indicated an expected 20 people, but the public holiday thinned it down to 8. But what was lacking in quantity was more than compensated for in quality. The largely foreign group was very keen and we were soon steaming up to the Pipe Track from Theresa Avenue in record time. We ascended by Woody Ravine, reveling in the views, and some being only too glad to see the top after the brisk ascent. It was cold on top and the break was a quick, huddled affair and it was time to press on. While Nic bounded off across the mountain to descend on the Kirstenbosch side, the rest of us headed along the Apostle's



path past the Saucy Dog and Slangolie Gorge to scramble up to Tranquility Cracks, my dog breaking out in front and leading the way for me. We enjoyed a sociable lunch in the sun under a clear sky and surrounded by wonderful views.

After thoroughly exploring the cracks it was time to head down – but not this crowd. They just wanted more, and so it was off to the Valley of the Red Gods where we bundu-bashed up to the cave but decided that the MCSA's naming of the valley must have been alcohol-assisted. The uphill pull to the valley had done the trick and they were finally ready to go home, so we headed down Kasteel's Poort, a very slow descent because of a HUGE crowd of kids crawling down the mountain ahead of us.

It was a great day with conversation ranging from Y2K conspiracy theories to genetics, evolution and what on earth it is that climbers find enjoyable in scaling rocks. The king protea were still in flower, some red crassula were poking through here and there and we were treated to a pair of black eagle wheeling lazily in the sky. I can't think of a better way to have spent a public holiday!

How can a land which is home to the great elephant leave you the same again? How can a place where God, showing off outrageously, put everything together in one space, not make you understand yourself a little better? Africa is God's showcase, His sample bag, His giant emporium, the most important part of everything created.

Bryce Courtenay, I was born in Africa

An Epic Tale

Fawlty Towers

Sunday 28 March

Cecily Roos

Leader: Cecily Roos

A group of eager climbers woke up ridiculously early one very hot and sunny Sunday morning. Those who arrived at the planned time, (including the intrepid leader who was actually early for a change), hid in various shady spots and tried to steal a little sleep while waiting for the others to arrive. (And for Gavin to go back and fetch his friend whom he had forgotten to pick up in his mad rush to arrive on time.) Anyway, after half an hour or so, everyone had been re-awoken and were well on their way to Silvermine.

On arrival, our glorious leader delegated various other people to carry the gear, and began on the long, hot march to Faulty Towers. About three-quarters of the way up people started directing slightly nasty comments towards her about the steepness of the incline (to which she didn't respond because she was rather out of breath herself). By the time she reached the crag she was totally knackered, but nobody else seemed to buy her idea that the walk-in was plenty of exercise by itself and that it was actually too hot to climb anyway. So she led one of the easier climbs, and then recovered by finding a shady spot and belaying everyone else. In the meantime the really good climbers set up all sorts of horrendously difficult routes. (The kind which repeatedly deny us mortals and radically increase the attractiveness of things like chess and golf.) The day was enriched by varying degrees of dehydration, scarcity of sunblock, and the discovery of a 1.5 m boomslang skin a little too close to the crag. However, I believe that everyone had a good time, returning in good humour to the concrete jungle from whence they had emerged earlier that day.

There is an air of tremendous grandeur about the area. The gully narrows as it nears the face to soar upwards for hundreds of feet... To the left of the gully the huge concave rock face seems to go on forever. The gully itself has been scored by falling boulders. Many of the trees have been unable to stand the onslaught of nature and been pulped to matchwood... From the climbing angle the route is very interesting and should provide for every taste. There are laybacks, hand-traverses, strenuous pitches and delicate. There is a very interesting shoulder that has to be given the leader; the second man has to stand on a slightly loose flake and, with the leader on his shoulder, do a semi-pullup. This usually provides some fun and a bit of strong language.
Richard Williams on Touch and Go which he opened in 1961 with Barry Fletcher and Paul White



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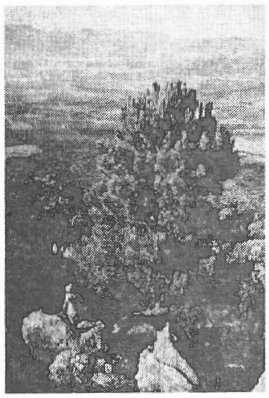
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The Bertsberg Bash

Easter Pine Hack, 2-5 April

Gavin Greenwood Reports Back

The Hackers were: David Acott, James Lockley and Gavin Greenwood

The original plan for the Easter weekend was to have a Heli-Hack, however the lack of a helicopter kind of took the heli out of it, but not the mickey. Unfortunately when the notice for the hack went up on the board there was a definite lack of interest shown by the club. There were however the three of us who were determined to have an enjoyable long weekend destroying the alien enemy and releasing whatever frustrations we may have had from the past few months.

Us three intrepid adventurers planned to park the bakkie at Stu Dam and head for the Golf Course Country Accommodation (a.k.a The Golf Course, next to Bertsberg). However before we could rest there at the day's end our goal was to ambush an alien pine on the slopes of Bertsberg, which could easily be seen from the dam. After a night at the Golf Course we were going to head across to the Fresher's Country Meet campsite. The next day we planned to take a serious detour around towards the Sentinel, down Adderley Street, up and down the Witels (no, not the whole way) to end up at the Alder Ring campsite. Then finally we were going to hike out back to the car and come home, having destroyed as many aliens as we could sink our teeth into.



So on Friday morning we planned to meet at the info center and then drive to Ceres. I wasn't sure about what time we were supposed to meet so I arrived early. Then James arrived and we sat and waited, and waited, watched the sunrise from the info center, and then we decided to go and look for Dave. We got to Kopano and saw his car so I went to his room. Knock knock, "Dave!" – and then from the other side of the door, "O s#*^!" Eventually we made it to Ceres.

Just before we set off from the car, Dave pointed to a big green blob on Bertsberg and said something along the lines of "Today's objective, seek and destroy!" As we went about our business it wasn't long before we spotted our first victims for the hack, so we loosed our weapons (a bow saw, a pair of loppers each and two Ars, small handheld saws) and let rip. On the way to our objective we found a number of outliers, some clumps and some individuals.

In the late afternoon we finally arrived to achieve our objective. Standing on a rock we looked 3m down to find the roots and about 7m above our heads to spy the top of the Beast. He was not alone in his little sanctuary, for there were about twenty smaller trees scattered near by. We took out the small ones before we cleaned up. The plan of action was to make a large back cut and then to finish the job. With a large bow saw our most effective device of destruction, -this job was not going to be easy, none the less we had to succeed.

Gloves on, saw between two, and teeth to the bark we set to work. After about an hour of cutting and getting one blade stuck in the trunk, he toppled and the victory was ours! Mission accomplished. On the way to the Golf Course we spotted a few more individuals but decided to return for them in the morning because it was getting late. We just managed to catch sunset from the beginning of the Golf Course.

The next morning we decided to leave our bags on the Golf Course, return to the leftovers from Friday and then lay waste to the rest of those slopes, returning to our bags for lunch. After lunch we wanted to destroy one very stubborn invader sitting pretty in the middle of a cliff face at the back of Bertsberg. This tree had escaped our blades last year because we didn't think we could get to it without ropes and other equipment (this time we brought equipment for that very reason).

That morning we woke up, had breakfast and spent the day prowling the slopes of Bertsberg. We returned to our bags via the peak and had quite a late lunch. Then we set off to drop another big boy.

After a short walk we found the perfect place just above the target. Dave set up a belay point, tied himself in, James got ready to belay Dave and I just took photos. Then, bombs away! Dave went down the cliff with a bow saw. A little while later, "Dave you've got about five meters of rope left!"



Dave: "Down a little more!"
James: "No more rope



Dave!"
"I'm 5m off the ledge!"
"NO more rope!" James was holding the knot we had tied in the end of the rope about 5cm from his harness. So he had evaded our attempts once again but Dave had seen from above that it was in fact possible to reach the tree from below, without actually climbing. Sunday would be the day!

Sunday morning we left our bags at our campsite again, we intended to get the tree on the cliff and return by lunch and then head off towards the Fresher's campsite hacking what we could.

That morning we made our way around to the tree but we found that last year we had left a lot more than just that one tree behind. Eventually we got to the one we'd been aiming for the whole time. When this tree fell it dropped about 25m to a ledge where it broke into two pieces and then continued to the slopes below where the larger piece broke into two again. That was quite a sight to see.

After that we decided to carry on around the back of Bertsberg clearing a few other ledges we saw that were covered in small trees. When we got back to our bags the sun was already setting so we

camped in the same place again.

On Monday we headed back to the car but we went back via a different route which was closer to the Fresher's campsite.

NOW!! All of you who think this sounds like too much hard work then you're missing out on some of the most fun you can have with the Mountain and Ski Club. Yes, there is work involved but you do what you can and enjoy it because you're not forced to do anything. Of course the enjoyment factor is greatly increased when there are chain saws available and even more so when a free helicopter ride is involved. Just take a look at the photos, now do you think we weren't having fun? You should all get involved in the club in every way that you can because you will have fun. Life is here for our enjoyment, make the most of it!

A rope running over a rock belay snaps more easily than the ordinary breaking strain of the rope indicates. The climber is advised to pad the belay with sweaters. Some writers have even gone so far as to state that rather than use a rock belay, the second should secure himself to the belay. Perhaps this is going to extremes.
Dr Martin Versveld, 1937

Zigging the Zags on the Swellendam Trail

6 – 11 April 1999

Adriano Iorio

Leader: Briony Parkes
Never in the history of man (er should I say the Mountain and Ski Club) has a hike been more totally dominated by Arsehole. The rise and fall from the hierarchy is so often swift and unforeseen, but none has seen anarchy after revolution after anarchy as was witnessed during the *n* (where *n* = a very big number) amounts of Arsehole we played during our days in Swellendam.

The reason for our fixation was not an inherent desire to rebel against the aristocracy and rule the kingdoms of the earth, nor was it because we were finding new ways to identify the despots and autocrats amongst us, nor was it some horrible experiment that the mice were playing on us (according to my Hitch Hiker's Guide to Swellendam), but rather it was as a result of rain. Rain, rain and more rain.

Other than Arsehole, we found much amusement in the classic chirps and moments we found ourselves in out of desperation to find something funny in what we were doing. I will try to explain some of the situations which were the origins of some of the chirps I will quote. If you still don't find it funny, well then I guess you Had To Be There. HTBT!

The first day was a cinch. We arrived at the car park, signed in and kitted ourselves out in preparation to do battle with a certain Monsieur Swellendam. After 500 metres we reached our first hut. The evening was incredibly warm with temperatures having apparently sky rocketed earlier in the week. There we were preparing for an absolute scorcher!

It turned out that some bad weather set in over night, and so we played Arsehole

the whole of the next day. This is where Duncan earned his nickname for his star performance that rivalled any Clint Eastwood poker game. It is a pity he always played out of turn though!
It continued to rain the next day. We decided that boys would be boys and that we were going to get wet. Thanks Briony! Oh, this is the part where Briony our intrepid leader features. She who is not afraid to admit when she is lost, but hey there is a theory why there is a path less travelled. The theory postulates that since the other path leads nowhere, those travellers who find themselves at the point of no-whereness decide to return along the same path to a point of at least some-whereness and hence that path becomes the path more travelled.

Uncle John starred the next day in yet another rain filled set. Old Uncle John's knees gave in very surprisingly and unexpectedly half way into the hike, and earned him a nomination for the Sherpa of the Year Award! Not!



"I don't know if this is such a wise thing to do, George."

On arriving at Boskloof Hut (a magic hut in an awesome possie) our dearest Rod the Finn was bursting, maybe because he was absorbing so much of the extra water. This gave rise to the expression of "Sending a friend to the coast!" Man, that friend was going nowhere, maybe he could've dropped in a hole at very best.

That evening the Fair Lady, or Elle, or whatever magazine chicks read came out, and soon we began doing a group crossword effort. Sorry, was that Tracy with a 'z' de Villiers? No? Okay then spell it please...Oh I see, a silent 'z'; should have known that, I thought, there isn't a 'z' in Tracy.

The next day's weather proved to be a slight improvement, but geez did it have a long way still to go. On our way to Goedgeloof Richard wanted to know how many bottles of beer sat on the wall. He landed up counting all 99 of them. So did we.

To our relief the weather cleared the next day, especially since we had planned to combine two days walking into one seeing we started one day late. Briony headed up the group and tried out her new found theory once again. Her findings: it actually can be applied to the real world.

On reaching Protea Valley there were no prizes awarded for why it was called such. We lunched at what would have normally been an overnight hut, but sadly had to keep on pushing. Some went around on the Kruispad and some went over Vensterbank which is only advisable if the weather holds up. However the views from Vensterbank were right out of God's top drawer of

master creations. It was incredible! And as if this were not enough He added some extra spice of life in the form of a Black Eagle soaring the late afternoon thermals in his majestic African Sky!

There was however one predictable aspect of our less than vertical descent from the top of the pass. It was that after every zig, there was a ... ! (a zag?)

The last day saw our boots almost starting to dry out, after having been thoroughly drenched for a few days. The walk back to our starting point was very relaxed and temptingly surreal at times, as Daniel noted as we topped out with Swellendam lying before us. He just couldn't seem to get over the cows standing in the meadows. Oh what a life it must be to be a cow.

Throughout the hike Olly made the most of every opportunity to: 1) Yodel when he could yodel, 2) Swim where he could swim and 3) offer us tea when he made tea. Keep working on your yodel Ol! Then there was Lotti (dearest Charlotte er I mean Bridget), which has a definitely logical explanation behind it but hey I can't remember!
Now I need to reflect on this article and ask, "Can anyone who was not on the hike relate to the story that has unfolded?" If you can then I feel my job was well done and I am patting myself on the back as you read this, but if not all I can say is that you Should Have Been There! SHBT!

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These were the brave explorers who ventured forth into the midst of rain and Arseholes:
Briony "I'll travel any road twice!" Parkes
Duncan "Its not your turn" McDonald
Rod "I'll send any friend" Finn
Tracy "Thats with a silent 'z' " de Villiers
Daniel "Now I know what cows do on Sunday afternoons!" Coetzee
Olly "yodel odel del el l ... " Leinberger
John "I'll be there tomorrow" Titlestad
Bridget "You can call me Lotti" (I don't know who)
Richard "Was that 99 bottles of beer?" Kahle
Adri "I know what is after the next zig" Iorio.

On Meeting a Shy But Handsome Pine Tree:

James Taylor

Often one is strolling, without any cares, amongst the delicate garden-like vegetation of the Hex River mountains, possibly even whistling, when a tall good looking young pine tree, which is a short distance away, catches your eye. Immediately reality dissolves and this distinctive creature fills your soul with unbearable longing, you look around hoping there is somebody around to introduce you to this Tree, but there is seldom such a convenient host around. You will have to introduce yourself, and this should be done properly for, with pines, first impressions are the only ones.

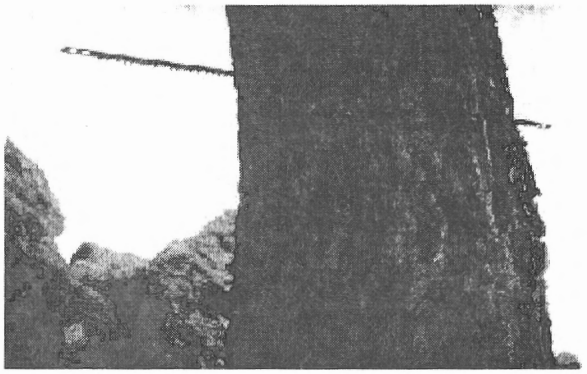
Approach the tree with vigour from the slope above. Initial noise is considered polite in this herbal community, it alleviates embarrassing surprise. When within one pace of the lowest branches, bow deeply. Take the final three steps to the trunk starting with a highly raised left knee and ending with a dragged left boot. Gently grasp branches on the West and East sides at approximately chest height and apply a firm torsion about the trunk, counter clockwise first and then reversing direction at a frequency which matches the resonance of the plant. This should be done for less than a minute. Release the branches rapidly bringing both arms to your sides, preferably with an audible clap.



Now is the time for the first speech. Whisper to any bundle of needles: "*cano securem viremqe*". Step back.

Wait several seconds, then step solemnly back, with the head bowed and hands joined behind your back. Now look up to the highest branches, and say, in a voice that these higher branches will easily be able to hear: "*praecipitiabis ad terram*?"

If the tree now says nothing, you have been rejected and the tree should be killed.



Krakadouw

24-27 April

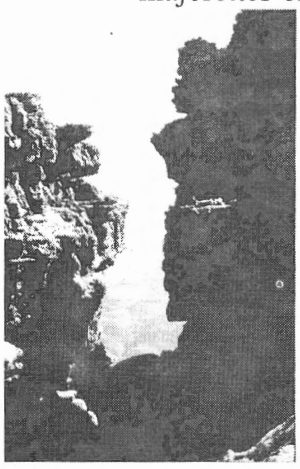
Heather Gray & Iraçema Hromnik

Leaders: Warwick Board and Jeremy Wakeford
Group: Di, Rainer "the kraut" Lehr, Warren Johnson, Iraçema Hromnik, Heather Gray

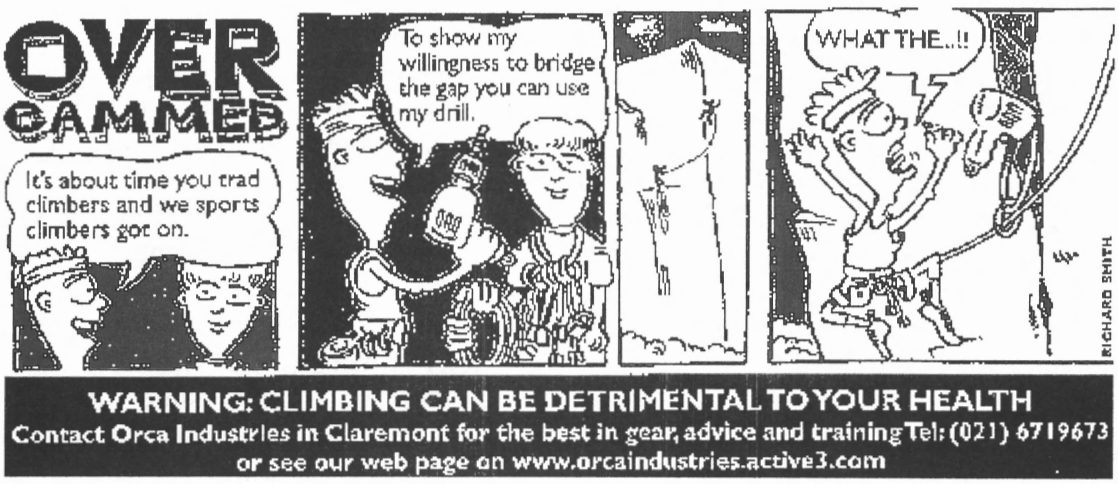
Wow! What an absolutely awesome extended weekend. It feels like we've been in another world, one full of amazing rock formations that come alive in the evening light. Boulders, mushrooms, sandstone that crumbles under one's fingertips…

After ignoring the intimidating notice full of many unknown words and concepts plus the fact that all the other names appeared to be guys, we tentatively signed up. Things didn't get better as we heard about Warwick's reputation. Sama went to vet him to get some reassurance and was shown many confusing maps.

Day One:
Thus it was with a little trepidation that we packed and repacked our rucksacks after getting up at an insane 4am only to sit around as we became better acquainted with Warwick and Warren's sense of time. They eventually came to pick us up at 5:30 am. We drove through the thickest mist either of us have ever seen. We were reduced to navigating with our heads out of the window trying to see the white lines on the edge of the road. We didn't have much to say (perhaps the marginal (?) age gap played a role) and caught up on some much needed sleep. We stocked up in Clanwilliam, watching the drum majorettes on the main road and spilling coffee (Heather).



Under the intimidating gaze of Klein (or was it Middel) Krakadouw, we started heading up the riverbed and not 15 minutes into the walk the party had split and we were lost. After many wisecracks on leadership skills we hiked our way to a pool on the river where



we had lunch – a swim and a snooze... Then came the grueling slog up and up and up some more. A brief detour at a boulder (which necessitated a compulsory climb) and many false summits later saw us walking in the rapidly fading light towards a clump of trees where we pitched our tents in the semi-dark. Exhausted after a day of Warwick's puns and poor jokes we fell asleep fairly early (some of us more comfortable than others due to bushes, that we less experienced tent pitchers failed to notice).

Day Two:

The sun rose above Sama perched on a boulder watching various discreet loo trips. Leaving our tents to mark our spot we paced up to the summit of Groot Krakadouw, not forgetting the obligatory lunch by a boulder and another snooze. The top looked like a lunar playing field and had endless exploring possibilities. We did some amazing scrambling, stuff we never thought we could do, much less so with huge packs on our backs. After this Heather required some shorts reconstruction. We successfully completed our first abseil to the cave (or should we say wind tunnel) where we were to spend the night. We watched an amazing sunset sipping Amarula (from a pink juice bottle) at an altitude of 1700m with the faint outline of Table Mountain in the distance.

Day Three:

This was the most awesome day of all. We awoke early to go on a "Summit Walk". After much chimneying and forced crack crossing where Nina, one of our shorter members, required some posterior assistance, we packed up and headed towards the abseils. Jeremy encouraged us by providing us with a detailed account of all accidents (and deaths) in MSC history on the way.

Abseiling - the feeling was amazing: height, space, no fear... Perhaps that's not entirely accurate. Sure there was a lot of height, but Di hung in space wedged between two rocks while Warwick pulled on the rope from the top and Jeremy from the bottom. And as for fear, our German friend (Rainer) was in his element here and not even the ceaseless torrent of abuse of all things German (courtesy of Warwick) could make him succumb to his fears. Sama, on the other hand, seemed to thrive on heights and succeeded in evoking his concern on numerous occasions from the ledges on which she was perched. We ran out of time and were forced to forfeit

Warwick's over-ambitious plans to conquer Middel and Klein Krakadouw. That night we enjoyed a communal vegetarian curry. It was apparent that we knew each other better as we chatted and sang until midnight trying to exhaust Warwick's unreal memory for lyrics. He was complemented by his better half, Warren (they even live together).

Day Four

Bruised and battered, we struck camp and headed over the ridge homewards. We were fortunate to enjoy warm weather as well as a plentiful water supply from previous rains. We learnt much about geology, birdcalls and climbing. This reputedly "hardcore" hike left us a lot more confident and keen to tackle further MSC adventures.

P.S. A perfect ending took place a week later when we gathered for an epic vegetarian lasagna, slide slow, music and drinking session with most of us (...?!) leaving at 3am.

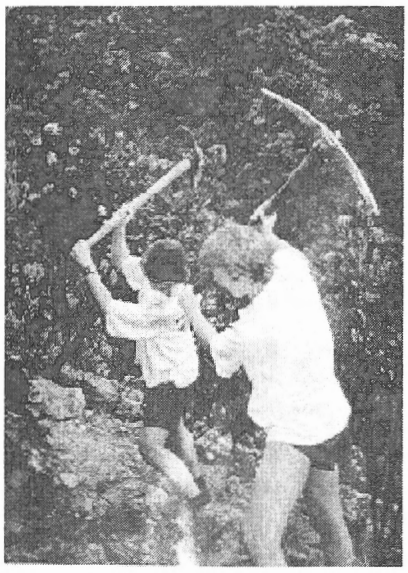
What Really Happens On Pathbuilding Meets

24 – 27 April

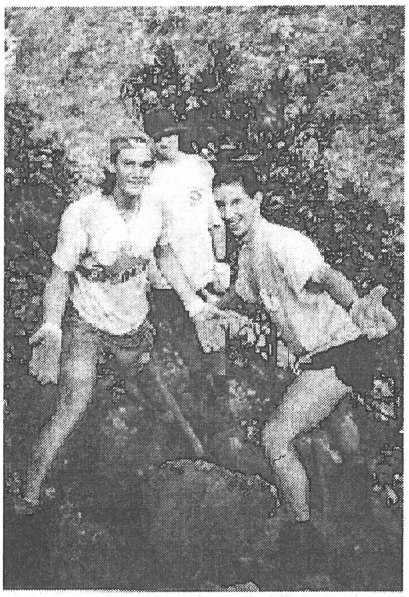
Alex Brooke Tells It Like It Is

Hey hey! I just got back from my first conservation meet and it was cool! The walk in wasn't hard, and you decide your own grading thereafter according to how hard you choose to work. Throw in the Witels, plus free alcohol, free petrol and free dinner at the end and it's a pretty good deal!

About eight of us enjoyed the weather, the river halfway, the views, the absence of the REEDS and most of the vegetation in general (Adderley Street had burnt about two weeks previously) and we also enjoyed making pretty patterns on our limbs with the ash. We did not enjoy the loads we carried (I speak specifically on behalf of Gavin and Greg who 'volunteered' to carry enormous rolls of wire mesh – to which the remaining vegetation displayed a peculiar affinity). The results of the first pathbuilding team were impressive (horrible flashbacks of a previous pathless trip haunted me) and I was keen to get stuck in.



We were joined by many others, arriving in the dark, and the Alder Ring slept about 17 the first night. Cosy. With



gorgeous weather and many enthusiastic volunteers, the path soon started looking really good. Pathbuilding certainly seems to bring out one's creative side and would-be engineers arranged rocks, stakes and sandbags in a most aesthetically pleasing manner. After a day's work, most people left and six of us – Dave, Jen, Paul, Olly, Gav and me – the dedicated (to a sunny Witels weekend, that is) ones, stayed.

The meet raised some important questions, the most pressing of which proved to be: "How does one dispose of copious amounts of alcohol?" Various, brave solutions were offered (no thanks, Dave, no more jelly) and it seemed the favourite was Dave's Orange-No-Sugar-Needed-100ml-Makes-80l concentrate. Foul, foul stuff. If you have any better suggestions, your presence is required on the next meet. (*Please* come.)

One afternoon, after a post lunch snooze, I returned to find my comrades in various degrees of alcohol-induced insanity: falling over and laughing maniacally at the most horrendously, *agonizingly* unfunny remarks that were politely referred to as 'humour'. They were, nevertheless, bravely prepared to 'attempt' the afternoon's work. It was a long trek to the path, across a suddenly raging torrent, filled with jagged boulders that were just too far to reach and never stayed in one place. All crossed the Witels safely, but by the time we reached our work stations up the hill, my position of 'Safety Control' (words derived from the ancient Greek for Sober One) had aged me considerably. Everyone else was banned from using any tools or power-carrying boulders on cliff edges and that left approximately one person capable of meaningful work. (As meaningful as work can be when prompted every minute to launch oneself off the edge of the path by above mentioned 'humour'.) And so we reached consensus: to abort our work mission in the interests of our health [ie: UCT insurance funds]. "At least we tried."

We found fines necessary for:

- endangering a fellow hiker's life by obscene reference to avocado
- yodelling
- filling and carrying unnecessary sandbags
- not getting trashed after lunch

Highlights of the trip included trying to safely explode ancient gas canisters (found in a cache of Witels equipment under piles of rocks); enjoying Gavin's blatant disregard of the Fashion Police (his shorts!?) and thrilling in taking on gravity, inertia and many other scientific phenomena, by hurtling down our new path at breakneck speeds. Wheeeee!

Despite our motto "If you can carry it, it's not big enough", this trip was for

everyone. And the other good news is that there's booze left over for the next meet!

PS: Mention should be made that this meet provided one of the situations that enabled Nic Gibson to walk away with the Crash Test Dummy Award at this year's AGM.

The Decathlon

30 April 1999

Keith Forbes

You're all invited to the Decathlon... Hulk Hogan, Mike Tyson... You're all invited... You'll never survive!

The Decathlon was 1999's annual MSC climbing-drinking competition held at the climbing wall in Sports Hall 3. The competition consisted of ten events with a sting in the tail — after each event, the participants were scored, but before proceeding to the next event they had to down a vicious cocktail prepared by Gavin Greenwood. The cocktail contained 10ml of vodka for each point that the participant had scored in the event. This rule helped to level the playing fields as the high-scoring participants proceeded in an ever-increasing state of intoxication to the next event:

The *Swing* consisted of a Tarzan-like jump off the Sports Centre Balcony, the participants each grabbing two handfuls of shoes off they accelerated in their pendulum fall, often coming precariously close to the ground. The shoes were slam-dunked into a cardboard box to score points.

For the *Snap* event, the participants formed pairs and the lighter participant was hoisted (or 'snapped') dynamically, as quickly as possible from the ground and up into the Sports Centre rafters.

The *Power Climb* was a short, yet savage boulder problem set by chief route-setter Jamie Smith. Although only two moves long, this boulder problem spat most participants to the ground, even after many practice attempts. The fewer the number of attempts on the *Power Climb*, the more points were scored.

The *Blind Climb* was an epic sightless traverse across the entire climbing wall. Blindfolded participants scored points for how far they managed to climb. "Go forsh zhu blue hold, Rosh" - Maarten Turstra.

The *Bottle Game of Death* was a true test of cunning and agility. Armed with two wine bottles, the participants attempted to place the one bottle as far from a line on the floor as possible, without touching the floor past the line themselves.

The *Speed Climb* was a sprint event. How quickly is it possible to ascend the main climbing wall, with a running start from behind the mats? "This is an

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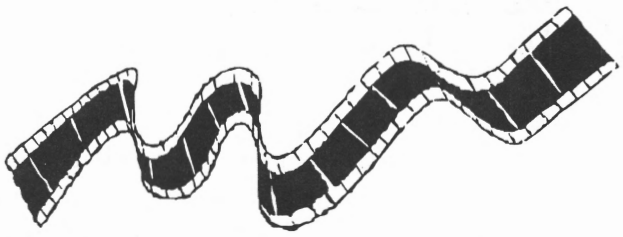
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awesome test of concentration and fast-twitch muscle fibres" - Derek Rowles.
The *Balancing Act* was a four-part obstacle course over successively narrower balancing beams, terminating with a barrel roll to the finishing line. "Ar'm tooo shloshed to even shtay on zhu firsht beam"-Donald Garlick.

The *Long Climb* started off misleadingly easy, but each move soon seemed harder than the move before it. Only up-and-coming climbing ace Knoffel Kop made it to the end. "Zhis long climb ish muzhu frkn ard" - JVZH.

The *Welly Toss* was designed to test the dexterity of the now very inebriated participants, and to continue the footwear-into-box theme. After a dizzy spin administered by the judges, the participants had to land the Wellington boot in the distant box.

The *Vertical Climb* was a balancing act in which the participants had to move up the vertical wall as effortlessly as they could, feeling as light as possible. The higher they climbed the more points in the bag.

The top three climbers, each having downed half a bottle of vodka by this stage, competed in a final. They had to climb a long, colourful route across the climbing wall, downing beers that were attached to the wall en route. Justin Hawkins maintained his reputation as an A1 alcoholic and climber, beating Jeremy Samson and Rod Bracher in to second and third place respectively. "Keesh, we need to have ash Deshcashlon every monsh" said Hawkins before collapsing exhausted.

Prizes were generously donated by French Woods Summer Camp, Jeremy Samson Agencies and ORCA Industries.

The Three Stooges?

Hoare Hut Work Party

Kevin Iles

Leader: Alan Matthews (of course)
I have just one thing to say : "Never trust the huts convenor". *Especially* if the convenor happens to be Alan. Even more so if the sentence starts with "I need some strong guys..." It was the weekend before the Hoare Hut birthday party and Alan wanted a few people to carry corrugated iron up to the Hut and others to do some work on the road and bridge. I was part of the "crowd" that were going to do some work around the base hut area, but as soon as I got to campus I knew I had been tricked. It was just Gavin, Alan and myself – and three sheets of corrugated iron that filled his car to the extent that the ends pressed against the front and back windows. What bothered me was the terrible coincidence – three pieces of metal, three of us. Clearly I was making an ascent.

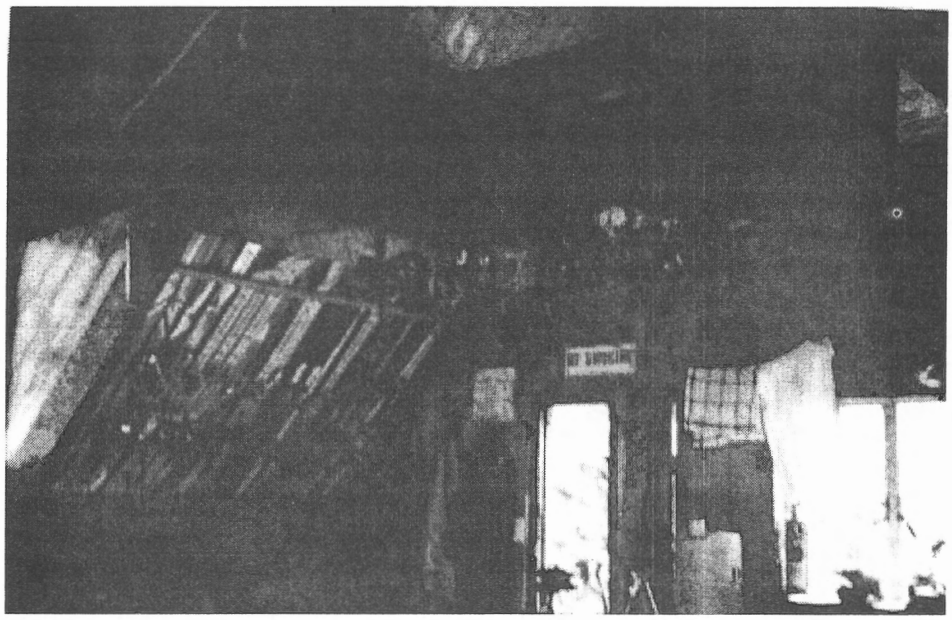
Ever thrifty, we headed for Wellington to skip out the cost of the tunnel but were happily informed by the town's constabulary that the road out of Wellington was closed for an hour due to a cycle race. So it was back to the N1

and through the tunnel and finally Waaihoek. Alan took the bridge like Superman on acid while I went for the steady, cautious and utterly hopeless approach. Several packed rocks later we had my car across and the bridge was earmarked as a definite job that needed doing. Starting from the parking lot we headed back down the road with machettes clearing some stray bush although most of the road had already been cleared by some kind soul in a tractor. The bridge took somewhat longer, but with all three of us packing rocks and Alan employing some serious civil engineering tactics it was soon much safer.

I had to return to be in Cape Town by 18:00 for work, and ate my lunch contentedly knowing there wasn't time for me to make the ascent with a huge hulking piece of metal. Alan had other plans. Between the two of us we carried the sheets to base hut, discovering for the first time how horribly awkward the whole thing was going to be. Gavin had managed to prop his piece on top of his rucksack and balance the end on his head and made much better progress. Like pack-mules we pushed on upwards enjoying the view of mountain, grass and a sky that looked astonishingly like corrugated metal.

At the top of Little Agony it was time for me to go. It was a relief to get rid of my burden but I was glad to have been a part of the effort, even for a short while. It was sad to have to see Alan shoulder the second piece of metal and carry on upwards, Gavin dutifully following with his sheet balanced on his head. I headed down towards my car and home, stopped to chat briefly with Rinky as she led some others up and was soon back on the N1. It was sad to think that while only two people sweated up the mountain carrying sheets of metal, many would come next weekend when there was a party on offer.

It is always the same small crowd who work hard to make the club enjoyable for everyone. It's simple, just put back into the club what you get out. As an initiate at work parties I had fun doing it.



Happy Birthday Hoare Hut!

HOARE HUT BIRTHDAY PARTY

15th – 16th May 1999

Alan Matthews

Group: Far too numerous to list
Leader and Co-ordinator: Alan Matthews

Any alien ship skimming above the Ceres Valley on Saturday night, may have noticed some strange activity high in the mountains. Deviating from the regular flight path, they would have observed 40 young men and women, dressed in formal evening attire, lined up outside a small wood and iron hut, at 1800 meters above sea level. They stood there for several minutes while another young man proceeded to point a procession of small flashing boxes at them, each flash accompanied by ceremonial abuse. "Ah well," they would conclude, "just another randomly illogical action from a species most noticeable for their lack of rationality and shortage of limbs."



"Pretty cool, Dewey. ... Hey! Shake the jar and see if they'll fight!"



There we were, all crouched together while Paul and Ben ran through an endless array of cameras, all incompatible with lighting conditions, picture size or Ben's technical ability. Finally we were released and all rushed back into... the supper queue?

Once inside and fed, the evening began to take on a lighter tone, not least due to the musical offerings which were somewhat – how can I put this? If they were short on technique they were long on emotion and soul.

Robyn's stupendous cake interrupted what looked to be a promising, if hazardous, drinking challenge. Amazing cake! And that desert, wow!

As the evening slowly drew to a close we pulled the mattresses outside and settled down. A lullaby from Troy and Andrew was met with calls of "Take your clothes off"... until it became obvious that Andrew was taking us seriously. We opted for polite laughter.

To a ship of aliens the whole exercise must have seemed devoid of reason or logic. The strain of the pack, the unpleasantness of washing up, the

reality of cold water and a crowded hut – why the bother? Why all the effort? The answer lies somewhere between the warm rock by middle pool and the feel of the wind on your back as you turn to face out from Point High. The proximity of friends, and strangers, and the immediacy of human contact, and the quiet moment of solitude one always finds, whether it's at the peak, waking from sleep, or just taking a break. Somewhere between the sweat, laughter, embraces, mouthfuls, warmth, cold, hunger, sweat, day and night, lies the secret of these days. Sometimes logic is just in the way.

Cederberg Weekend

21st to 23rd May 1999

Howard Smith

YOU CAN'T PLAN THE WEATHER – BUT YOU MUST PLAN FOR IT!

Leader: Howard Smith
Group: Howard, Ianni, Ruth x2, Jocelyn, Heather, Tanya, Dave, Alan, Carol, Jeremy

We had the first winter adventure of the year when we confidently and complacently set off from Cape Town to ascend the Cederberg's highest summit – Sneeuberg – and take in the Maltese Cross along the way. Confident because the pre-planning had been well done: we'd booked the permit and had a pre-meet; we had map and compass; there were enough cars and departures had been agreed to suit everyone; the Club first aid kit had been ordered and collected; everyone had paid the fee; even the grill and wood had been packed for the Friday night braai!

Complacent because the summer had dragged on into late May and none of us had begun to think of winter and cold fronts: the forecast of rain for Saturday had been noted but the probable implications had not registered. Collective organisation couldn't compensate for this individual complacency which meant most of the party were without adequate cold weather clothing.

Friday evening at the beautiful campsite at Algeria Forest Station deep in the valley floor was idyllic. There was cloud on the tops but it wasn't too cold to enjoy a leisurely braai which lasted 4 hours to accommodate the late arrivals. After a good night's sleep we were up before 7 and almost ready to go when the last two members arrived just after 8 to complete our party. Half an hour's drive and 500 meters of elevation saw us at Eikeboom and the start of our hike to the Sneeuberg Hut. It was still dry and not too cold as we made our way into and up the kloof. An hour later it was drizzling and half an hour further on, with the party now spread out, it was harder rain and wind as we and the urgent cold front arrived together on the plateau below the Sneeuberg summit at about noon.

It was, for all of us, a salutary reminder after a long dry summer of the severity and rapid effect of mountain weather during a cold front, but the message

was most valuable to those of us without waterproofs (yes, there were some!). Even more stupid were those of us (well, me!) who had them deep in backpacks and couldn't be bothered to put them on! Even those who had waterproofs and wore them were soon suffering from lack of gloves and headgear: cold hands, the kind too stiff to tie a bootlace or fold open a map; aching ears, wet socks and freezing feet were common complaints. For those in sodden cotton T-shirts and jeans the last hour to the hut was just miserable.

Only one member of the party of 11 had – and wore! – really suitable personal clothing (man-made wicking fibrepiles, proper waterproofs and gloves) and his performance and obvious relative comfort eloquently spoke for the value of his investment and the risk each of the rest of us, to varying degrees, was taking.

The Sneeuberg Hut, reached by all of us just after 2pm, was a refuge from a strengthening wind and increasingly longer and harder squalls of driven rain. Warm water, tea and soup was dispensed, wet clothes were stripped and hung up to drip on us. For some, the only dry replacement was their sleeping bag so it was early to bed. Recovery slowly occurred. It was to be a long stay, livened with conversation and shared food – and the rugby commentary on the radio courtesy of the two rangers who'd also settled in for the night. Two other hikers joined us during the afternoon so we were 15: a cosy number in a small hut, made even smaller with so much damp gear all around. Apart from forays into the driving rain and cutting wind to answer calls of nature, no-one left the hut for almost 20 hours!

Sunday dawned brighter with wintry sunshine breaking through, but there was still a stiff breeze and the Sneeuberg summit was in cloud. Little clothing had dried out and saturated boots had puddles in them. With appropriate and dry gear, the summit would have been an exhilarating challenge in those conditions: as it was only two enlisted for the level walk to the Maltese Cross while everyone else elected to return to the relative comfort of the lower altitude, valley shelter and the cars.

The walkout was fast and uneventful, with the drying wind and occasional warming sunshine raising spirits as we descended. With a much earlier return than planned to Cape Town now possible, some of us splashed out on the exorbitant R30 for an hour in the warming waters at the Citrusdal Spa, a welcome contrast to the chilling experience of the previous afternoon.

We're all wiser for the experience. We all know we can plan everything but the weather, and know that to succeed in our plans we must plan for that too. We were all reminded of the severity of the Cape cold front on an exposed mountainside, and the speed with which energy and inner body warmth is sapped by those weather conditions when one is without shelter and adequately clothed. Fortunately on this occasion we all reached the hut without delay, but had anyone of us inadequately equipped gone astray, the consequences for them and others in the party could have been serious. Those without adequate gear were reminded of the risk of hypothermia and the suddenness of its onset. I, for one, can record that my recovery to normal functioning after the hour of exposure in only cotton clothing on the walk-in took me three hours. I had to endure for 24 hours the general

discomfort of being without sufficient warm and dry clothing to replace that I'd let get soaked.

Back in Cape Town, after dropping off my travelling companions, I realised, embarrassed, that I had only a towel round my naked lower region when I popped into a cafe for a Sunday paper. Not a matter for comment on a boiling summer's day, but this was just at nightfall on the weekend of the Cape's first real cold front of the winter!

Table Mountain is the very essence of Cape Town: people live around it, look at it, feel its effect on the weather, walk and run all over it, and even jump from its cliffs in paragliders. The mountain dominates the landscape, and subtly influences the lives of all who live in its shadow. Newlands rain in Winter, the southeaster cloud in Summer, the soil in which the fynbos loves to grow, and even the fine white beaches, formed from its weathered sandstone cliffs, all owe their existence to the presence of the mountain... A beacon to those out at sea, a familiar landmark to those living around it, the mountain is the object of fierce devotion, a constant presence in a time of change... The mountain is a survivor... Many unknown, unsung people who have reached its summit, looked around them with delight and felt a sense of wonder. – Jill Baikoff

The Flames of Hell

Hellfire Rock Meet

29 & 30 May 1999

Carel Haumann

The group: too many to mention

Hellfire Buttress is an imposing rock band on the slopes of Du Toit's Peak. It consists of a series of crags, each with their own unique character and climbing style. Almost all the routes are long (between 25 and 50 metres), involved and very rewarding. Some routes are downright superb! The Wall of Flames offers thin, technical slabs for vertical face climbing; Hellfire Prow, exciting steep climbing; and the Pit of Despair overhangs wildly.

Jayson Orton and I decided to go for Saturday as well and spend the night at the Du Toit's Kloof MCSA hut, meeting the others at the Du Toit's Kloof Inn early on Sunday morning. At 8'o clock the boyz led by Ianni rocked up. I wanted to set out immediately, but they insisted on having coffee first. Eventually we got walking, only to meet about 20 Hoare Hut veterans along the N1. "Well, well, well", I was thinking. "Good thing this is a biiiiiiiiiiig crag!"

Everyone eventually got there, climbed and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Flintstones (17), Bonfire Arete (19) and Trial and Tribulation (20) were hot favourites and saw many ascents. Some harder routes were also sampled.

My thanks to Ross Suter and co. who opened the crag. One day he will still have to eat his hat after Jayson Orton does 'the Beast'. I can't wait!

Reaching my limit as I hang hard onto the tiny thing holding me from eternity... moving up, making that delicate balance transfer and laying away... fingers locked solid with fear against the hold. Need to be sure as I reach through to the rail, body tense, tenuous, and chest burning with the drug of life, and – I have it! Charge release surges me across the rail to the rest. Breather, shake-out, and continue. Dancing on a highwire up the wall; climbing lost in a mechanical desert surrounded by the stormy tumult of my mind... I pull through and sit there on the top, shaking... Cheating chance and playing chess; beating the opponent one move from checkmate. This is it – the voyage of self-discovery. – Andrew de Klerk on soloing Angel Dust (24 / H1)

The Group A+ Drakensberg Adventure

Andy Louis

Leaders: Andy Louis, Olly Liebenger
The Rest: Kerry, Ianni & his Ruth, Jacov, Jorsh, (got to be a foreigner with a name like that!) and Jason

The trip started after the last exam, when most of us left Cape Town, travelling in convoy. On Saturday night we stayed over at Ruth's parent's farm which is very conveniently located just outside Kimberley. We had a braai and slept in chalets they had built for game hunters. The most luxurious accommodation of the whole week!

Sunday was spent driving across the Free State to Bergville. By late afternoon all of us had arrived at the Caravan Park. We really *tried* to get going as early as possible on Monday morning (yeah right!). Being mid-winter and a freezing cold campsite, that just didn't happen. Eventually we were on our way to the Isandlwana Police Station, the start of the hike. I filled out the Mountain Register form (for search & rescue) – cool – I had to get everyone's details, including the girl's phone numbers and their (real) ages!

Steve led the A group: Steve's Ruth, James, Richard, Heather, Jenny, Dave and Gavin. Olly and I led the rest. Our route went up the Mnweni Pass right to the top, then down the Rockeries Pass back to the Police station. The others did this route the other way round. We all walked through the rural/tribal "location" of Upper Tugela for most of the first day. Taxi's, donkeys, cows, a lot of dust, the occasional car and lots of kids tagging along asking for "sweeties" were encountered. PRO's Andy and Jenny conversed with the locals, while Ruth and Jorsh conversed in Dutch (sort-of like Afrikaans). Not that we really knew/cared what they were saying. On passing one of the last kraals, a woman wanted to sell a wooden bowl she'd made. For R25! Um, Sorry! Our backpacks were heavy enough, at least Olly's was: 1x wooden cricket bat strapped to his backpack! AND she wanted us to carry that bowl all the way up the mountain and back again?!

Various rad swimming spots were found along the way. From the outset Olly had a mission: swim as much as possible on the hike! The rest of us weren't quite as keen (except for Ianni – but he *had* to keep clean because the girlfriend was with him *all* the time).

We slept the first night on a mini-plateau. Pitched tents on soft-ish grass, far more comfy than the rock-hard floor of the Caravan Park. The night was warm as we were still in the inversion layer (remember Matric Geography?) No one could get to sleep straight away, so DJ Andy came on the Mix, with kiff tunes to jam to! No one could get to sleep straight away…

We started out the next day around mid-morning, even though the sun was up at around 7am. Slave-driver Andy was being nice! From here: uphill all the way, starting out gradually then getting progressively steeper and more energy-sapping later on. Exact route to the top not visible at all. Andy waves his hand in the general direction of the path and tells the rest to just walk. Had lunch by some cool/freezing pools. Ianni, Olly and a couple of the others go check out Shepard's cave. The big/major/huge peaks now fully visible. Still no sign of our exact route to the top. Once in the eMnweni cutback we see just how far we have to go. Jason asks the two most commonly asked questions on the hike:

1. How much further?
2. How high are we and how much higher do we still have to go?

Various responses/answers to the above were given depending on who asked them:
Engineer/Scientist (excl. Business):

1. 6600m.
2. 1620m asl. (above sea level). 1400m vertical distance to go at a true bearing of 85°.

The rest:

1. Lots. 3cm.
2. Very high. Lots more to go. Lank, bru.

Foreigner:

1. Miles dude.
2. Thousands of feet. A couple really big feet up…. And across….

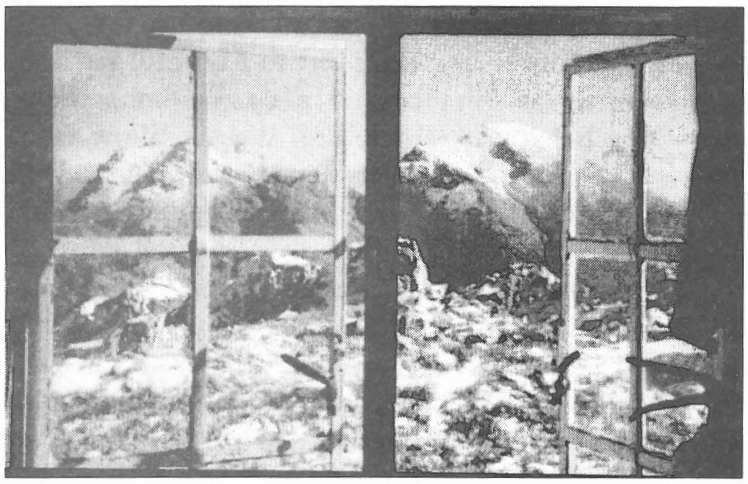
After about the tenth asking of these questions, the rest gave up and decided to just enjoy the moment and stop worrying. And anyway, everyone was managing very well. We made it to the top just as the sun was setting behind us (epic climb, bru!).

Welcome to Lesotho! Yay. The A Group had arrived a couple hours before us (easier route up). We all follow Ianni to where he wants us to camp (near water and lower down in the valley). It started getting really chilly so we got the tents up super-quick and cooked supper. Chef Andy was on the Grill, cooking up a kiff supper. Then everyone congregated in the two coolest tents on the hike: Steve's Palace (3-man Back-Packer™ Dome) and Andy's Digs (3-man Sunseeker™ Isodome). We played cards, those who had painfully schlepped their booze to the top drank it slowly, while we chatted about the last two days.

A couple of us woke up really early the next morning to go with Steve, Ianni and Dave to climb Mponjwane. We saw them start off, then went back down to have breakfast (and do other more important things, like sleep). Later in the day we explored the source of the Orange River. Along the way we came across this big frozen pond. The ice was lank thick! After our recent Engineering graduate (James) did a stress test, all ten of us started skating on it. Someone found a round-ish rock and we had ourselves a game of "Ice Soccer"! Wow but it was fun! Lots of people falling over, sliding, and basically trying to get the rock to their end of the pond! Kerry took the "Wipe-out Award of Honour" for her series of controlled landings. The three criteria for the Award were:

1. Originality: 0 = done before, 10 = unique
2. Air-time: 0 = never left terra-firma, 10 = conquered gravity
3. Injury: 0 = not a scratch, 10 = kicked the bucket

It is strongly advised that one does not score highly on No. 3.

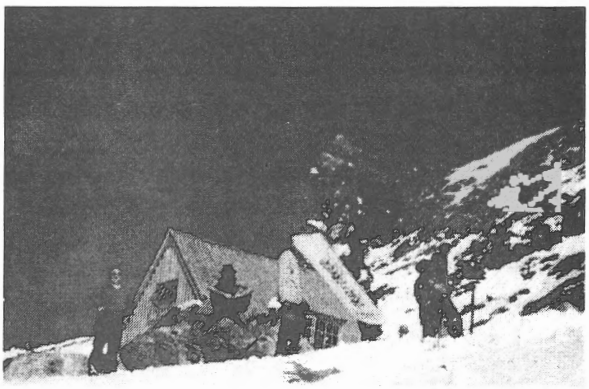




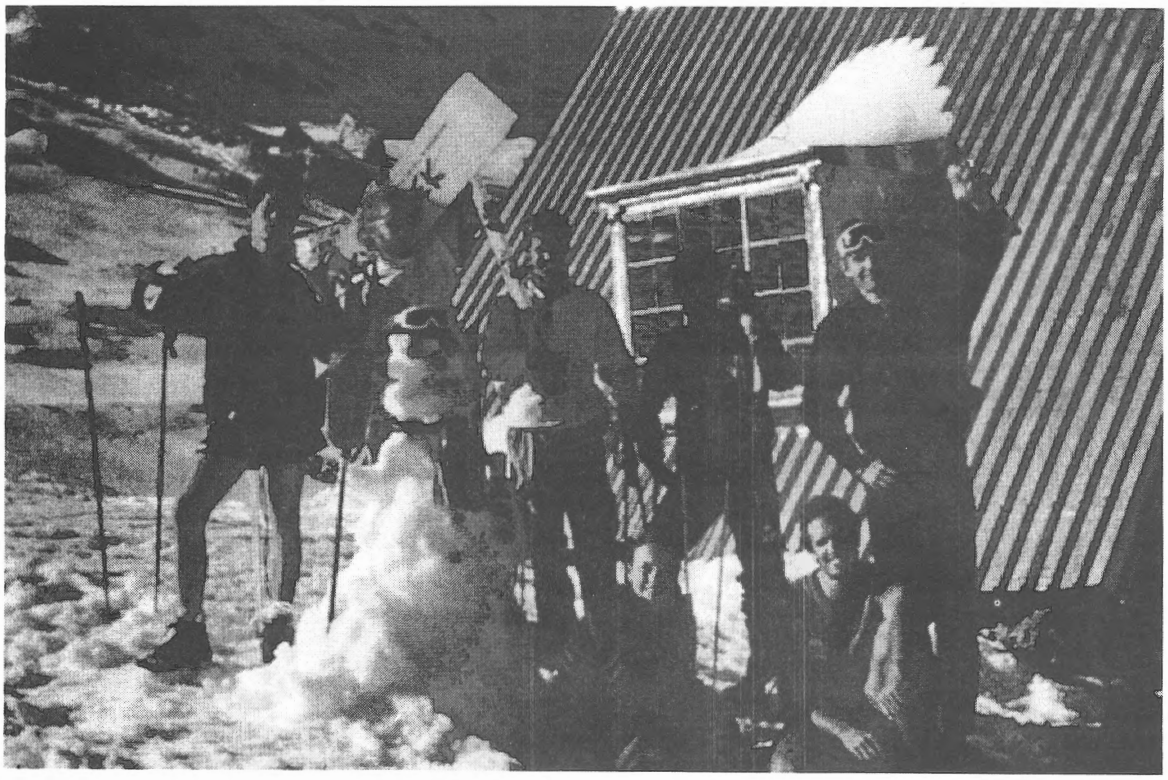
snow at waaihoek!!!!







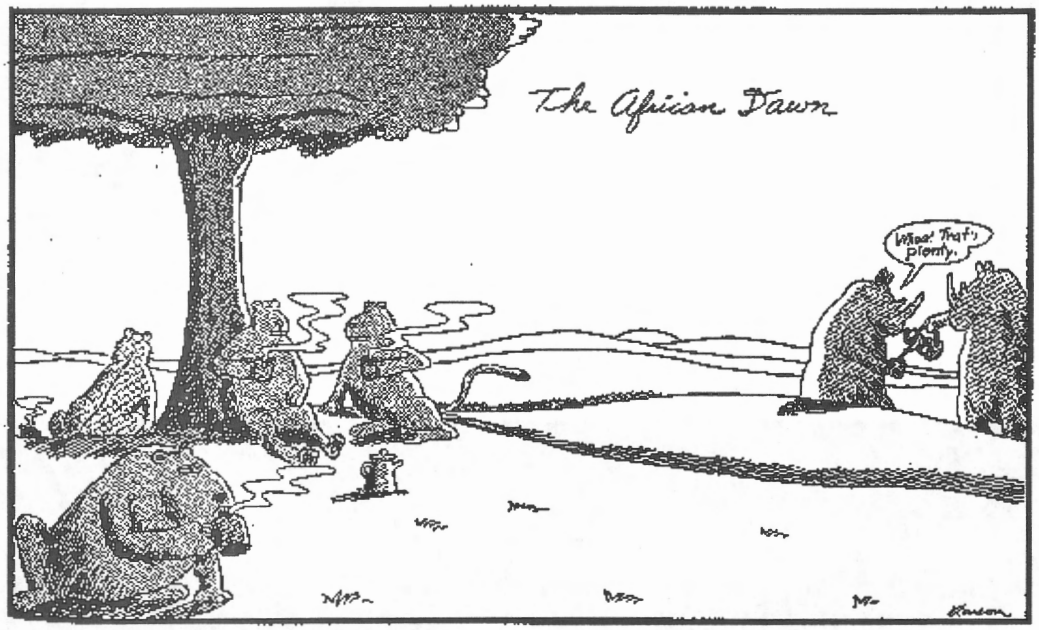




After we were sufficiently exhausted (and bruised) we carried on down the river to a waterfall, where we found a pool that wasn't covered with ice. Olly decided to have a quick swim, and the rest of us somehow ended up joining him! Crazy! But hey, it was one of those "been there, done that, got the goose-bumps to prove it!" moments. Defrosting took most of the walk back to camp in the midday heat (ha-ha). The rest of the afternoon was spent relaxing, arbing around, sleeping, chatting, and lurking around the campsite. Olly got a game of cricket going for a while. He'd carried his bat all the way up here, so he sure was going to use it! More exploring of the area was done by Jason, Jacov, James, Gavin and Jorsh, while the rest of us lazed around the campsite, slept, chatted etc…

Just as we were preparing supper the three mountaineers returned from their climb. We heard all about their day, how the climb was and how we all should've been there to share in their triumph of the huge spire. We were all asleep quite early.

Next day was a slow get up and go start, Steve's group left a couple hours before us 'cos of the longer route down. We arbed around, played cricket, listened to DJ Andy's kiff little Walkman (East Coast Radio's weather report especially!). It was getting **very** winding, and Olly was *hoping* for snow. Sorry, no clouds, no snow. The downhill was quite hectic due to the over-used path (> 30 donkeys using it twice a day). We had lunch at the first stream on the Pass. Lots of litter from the locals. This is the main dagga route from Lesotho to South Africa and we counted at least 30 donkeys each with three bags of the stuff. Bummer for those who schlepped their bankie all the way to the top. **Here the dube comes to you!** By late afternoon we hadn't gotten to any flat ground, but some caves were nearby. Thank goodness Ianni and I found one of them because all the veld in the area had recently been burnt by the locals. Everything was black, making it really hard to find a decent campsite. So our last night in the mountains was spent in a cosy little cave next to a tiny stream (getting water was quite a mission.)



Next morning: very easy-going walk back to the Police Station. We stopped many times, talking to the locals as we went through their villages. Weather warming up! Got back an hour or so after the other group arrived. After driving back to Bergville Caravan Park, we all headed for the showers! Ianni's "wonder cloth" deserves special mention because it's about the size of your hankie but can dry your whole body – very nifty! After everyone

was themselves again (all clean & decent) we went over to the Bergville Bowling Club (BBC) for supper & drinks. This was obviously the local's hangout. All the farmers were there, along with their wives and kids. The talk of the town was the following day's dog show (at least that's what we thought). It must've been quite important because the place was pretty empty by 10pm. Our crowd hung around for a while then stumbled back to the tents, stopping briefly for a quick play on the swings and merry-go-round. Now we really know who the kids are and who the boys are!

Saturday morning started very late: by 11am we were all packed up and on our various ways home. So that concludes the Drakensberg Hike for '99... (sob sob). See you all again next year (yeah right!)

Steve's Way Round the Drakensberg

Ruth Woudstra

"Boys... oh, and girls this time, let's head off to Bergville - the most happening spot in all of the Drakensberg (where the flossies and the squires will rock your world what what) and while we're at it, let's go for a bit of a hike, why don't we?" These were (not exactly) Steve's words to a group of keen hikers at a 'Berg meeting two weeks prior to the meet. The contents of the meeting otherwise will not be elaborated on - let's just say we all had nightmares that night of dizzy attacks, going dilly with hypothermia and gagging pink stuff into the white snow...

But snow was to be farthest from our itineraries. Driving from Cape Town via Kimberley or Pietermaritzburg the group of sixteen arrived at Bergville (yeah, yeah - not the most convenient route, it meant free accomodation, bru!). We felt right at home among the cream of the bowling champions who were gathering in the 'Ville for the over-80s heat of the World Championships. After being serenaded to bed by the Beach Boys, the realisation dawned on us: we were to miss the finals, as we were leaving first thing in the morning for Isandhlwana Police Station. No, this wasn't where we handed Richard over (sorry to disappoint the hopefuls), it was (sigh) the starting point of our hike.

After splitting up with Andy and Olly's group - which meant no yodelling for the next two days - the eight of us headed up the mighty Berg. We were welcomed by the cheerful voices of local children ("Plis, gis me sum sweet!") and the picture postcard view of the Saddle - which must belong to a donkey because there were no horses in the area. That evening we were passed by moonlight smugglers who, to Dave's disappointment, didn't even stop to offer any of their mysterious natural herbs and spices... I guess only the donkeys got lucky. Due to the full moon insomnia plagued most of us, but this did not hamper the group from making it up the escarpment the next day by 3pm.

The Escarpment... imagine a scene from The Lord of the Rings, a fairy-tale world where silence penetrates the very heart of you, where you feel yourself drowning in a sea of golden grass with only the view of deep blue peaks to behold as you go down... For those who are unappreciative of poetical descriptions, let me put it simply: it was totally awesome, bru! We were only to discover the cold the next day - where you couldn't as much as drool without ice forming around your mouth. There is only one little problem with the Escarpment. There are NO bushes, so be prepared to walk, ladies!



Before joining Andy's group, we explored Mount Mponjwane, which excited Steve, Dave and Ianni beyond belief, and effectively freaked the rest of us out. (You must understand the climbing type; they are a different breed.) Well, while the three men among the rest of us mice conquered the Mount, we went on a full-on exploration of the source of the Orange River. Not only did we find the source (eventually), but we found ICE! You have never seen a group of kids destroy the most beautiful ice lollies and frozen ponds Mother Nature ever made as we did. But the highlight of the entire hike was undoubtedly the game of ice soccer. Two teams slid it out on a great ice pond, a lonely pebble functioning as puck and peanuts serving as half-time oranges. Kerry was the uncontested winner of the prize for the most colourful legs. And to top it all off, Olly initiated a swim in the source of the Orange.

Our climbing heroes returned and after an interesting round of Uno-cum-This-is-a-Toc/Tic session we all went to bed. The next day was the big downhill, which Steve and Jen officially aced. There was much toying with Steve's notorious GPS and arguing over where exactly we were on the map (men - I mean, boys...) and we eventually found a blissful patch of grass where we decided not to pitch tent - it was time for that all-out under the stars Drakensberg experience. But what a night to end off our adventure... especially with Richard's homemade brandy pudding and tales of schoolboy days.

Day Five dawned and we headed back into the 'urban areas' (Steve's definition for any sign of civilisation) and played a mind-racking round of the Last Letter game - but not before an idyllic swim in what must be the Drakensberg's most impressive ten-meter pool (with natural cooling, and you don't even have to add chlorine, Dad). Reaching Isandhlwana Police Station concluded our fantastic trip, and we were immediately entertained by Dave being unable to relieve Heather from a blister *wat skrik vir niks*. And after being joined by the somewhat slower group (Andy, please don't read this) we headed back to Bergville to get a shower and play some good cricket (the gentleman's game was greatly missed, despite Olly taking his bat up the mountain).

The last night was spent at the Bowling Club where we were served with the most delish buffet meal this side of the Boereworsgordyn. Joris' 22nd Birthday leftover JC was very happily consumed, in a very short space of time, I might add, which made a perfect end to a perfect hike. Well, that is if you exclude the next morning's rude awakening by our newly-made friends from Ladysmith, of whom Malcolm amused us by singeing his eyebrows while lighting an early morning ciggie on Steve's stove (what what).

The long ride back to Joburg, Cape Town, Durban, wherever we dispersed to - sorry Bloemies, you're outta this one - was filled with memories of an idyllic hike. Naturally all the sufferings were now mere figments of our imaginations! But to all those Drakies who came, saw *and* conquered the mountain, I have only one thing to say: "Squire, I wanna see you there next year with some socks on your feet and a hot floozy by your side!"

Watervalboven Rock Meet

3 - 8 July 1999

Carel Haumann

The gang (at various stages and times): Steve, Ben, Ianni, Ruth, Dave, Leanne, Gavin, Mattieu, Jenny, Carel

"The Restaurant" - uttering the word is enough to inspire nostalgia / anticipatory excitement in any keen climber's heart. The group gathered from all corners of South Africa: victorious Mponjwane conquistadors, Joburg locals and the Natal-roadshow-let's-copy-Brett-Hochveldt's-trip duo all braved vicious toll-roads and arrived safely.

Lots of exciting climbing was to be had, some ascents involving rapid onsight techniques whilst others (including the author) chose to revive the ancient technique of aiding. After all, is not the primary purpose of bolts to act as convenient rests and/or holds? If the bolts happen to be spaced (more than 0.75 metres apart) then a toprope is always very convenient. In mountaineering the ascent and not the method is of importance - don't let any sportclimber try to convince you of anything else!

One particular day emerged as an all time adrenalin hit. In the morning Steve set up a mindblowing swing at a local train bridge. It involved an abseil off the end of a rope, with a resultant release, onto another rope which was connected to the other side of the bridge resulting in a 30m pendulum across the roof of the bridge. The first stage of the pendulum consisted of a 10m freefall after which the horizontal vector of the rope kicks in and rescues the subject from smashing into the river bed below. Those first 10 metres are absolutely riveting - initial surprise at the sudden acceleration as the gentle abseil gives way to the brutal onslaught of gravity; followed by a spontaneous and primordial scream of someone staring death in the eye. One is unable to suppress the reflex sensation that something has gone wrong, that one is plummeting into eternity... and then there's the surging relief and the sheer pleasure of swinging into the horizontal phase. Some were content with one go, others went twice, but everyone agreed that nothing would ever be as goooood as that first time!

After a momentary lapse into laziness back at the campsite, the group translocated to the Hallucinogenic Wall for the afternoon where a frenzy/orgy of climbing was to follow. On 'Once in a Blue Moon' (19) Ianni and Dave distinguished themselves as crack climbers of note by climbing the horrendous chimney halfway up the route with technique which I had thought lost to our generation.

Many other brave and memorable ascents took place both that afternoon and later on, the details of which have become hazed in my memory. I can only congratulate everyone who chose to come along, offer my sincere condolences to those who couldn't and hope that this meet will become an annual MSC tradition. See you at the Restaurant!

Transkei Trail – Msikaba to Port St. Johns

5 – 12 July 1999

Victoria McKechnie (Rhodes University)

Leader: Olly Leinberger
The accommodation - sparse, very sparse
The scenery - incredible, really incredible

If the first 24 hours were anything to go by, then our hike from Msikaba, a tiny village south of Port St. Johns, along the rural East Coast seemed doomed. After 11 of us all finally managed to get to Port St Johns (having come through Umtata where we were told in true African style that there was no petrol...at all), we met up with Gil who took us off to Amapondo backpackers just outside of the main town. Although initially having difficulty finding the place, we got there and began negotiations regarding accommodation and a car shuffle from Port St Johns to Msikaba. Due to time constraints, it was decided that instead of starting that evening and hiking to the first hut, we would start our hike the following morning as it was too unsafe to drive the connecting road at night.

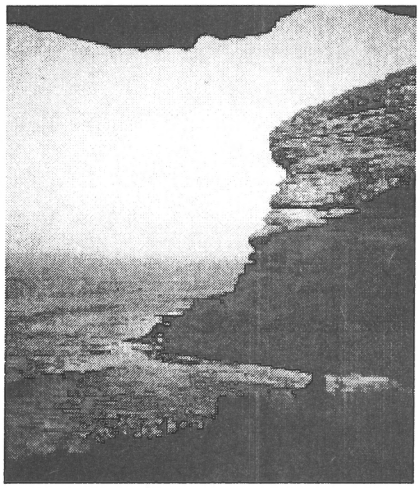
A fairly early wake up call after a good night's sleep and we were met with the second obstacle - Olly's boots and mat had gone missing overnight, and the only option was for him to do the walk barefoot. Ironically this was the only case of anyone losing anything on the entire hike, and then in an area where we were all aware - at times bordering on paranoid - of things going missing. The fact that the night watchman had kindly put them in a place for safekeeping probably says a lot about city slickers jumping to conclusions about the trusting and friendly locals. However, unfortunately due to this misunderstanding, our hardcore leader involuntarily became the Zola Budd of walking and had to spend the entire hike dodging the frequent cowpats and other obstacles. Yet as a seasoned and experienced hiker, Olly is characteristically optimistic enough as a person not to have let this slight drawback affect his or anyone else's hike and he still led the group of 12 hikers from the front.

After doing the drive (which felt more like a rollercoaster ride or a leg of the Camel adventure) in broad daylight, we were thankful that we had not attempted it at night. Upon arrival at Msikaba, the third unexpected 'spanner' was thrown into the works when the local lady in charge informed us that there were no overnight huts along the route save the 4th and final day. Although there was initial concern about lack of tents and the expectation of rain, the scarcity of huts along the route in fact turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Sleeping outside under the vast array of stars accompanied by the constant sound of the sea was a highlight of the hike - every night the places chosen varied greatly, from a natural cave next to a waterfall to a deserted beach accompanied by the sound of crashing waves.

Although there may have been a bout of initial bad luck, from the first step taken all bad omens were left behind. The weather was magnificent all the way - sunny and warm, allowing frequent swims in the sea and fresh water pools along the route. The sardine run along the east coast meant that there were dolphins to greet us when we woke and bid us good night when the sun set. The only directional rule of thumb regarding the route chosen was that we follow the coastline. This rural, deserted area made us feel like explorers venturing into the wilderness as the seemingly endless beaches that stretched for kilometres were more often than not completely deserted, as were the cascading fresh water rockpools

that flowed from one black pool to the next. Even in today's world where MTM and Vodacom have managed to construct towers upon the most prominent hills, we were so remote that cellphone signals were non-existent, and for the first time in a while the shrill ringing of invading cellphones were not part of every conversation.

Our first overnight stop was at Port Grosvenor, a small hamlet of houses built around a fresh water lagoon and a wide, unpopulated beach. This was the first test of culinary skills and an early indication as to hiking experience. Carol and Tracey stole the chef's award with their dishes, whilst Olly, Dan and George managed to pick up a few tips for their next hike! Thanks to Jan Krohn who ably took on the role of 'mum', the 3 musketeers were guided through the complex preparation of smash and soya, noodles and rice and although a few pots were burnt along the way, most meals (not all of them though!) were eventually edible. Gil - our American comedian/ actor/ lawyer - was a brilliant entertainment investment. The single Xhosa phrase that he had picked up along the way ('Yebo Mama') stood him in great stead as the communicator for the group. And although not even a native South African, he managed to meet a Xhosa chief, offer a gift of undrinkable juice concentrate to the Transkei house god and hook us all up with accommodation for 2 nights as well as the shuffle from Port St, Johns to Msikaba. (The word 'chum' probably helped as everyone became his good friend that holiday).



Our route continued along the goat and cattle tracks next to the ocean, walking across Transkei bushveld into tropical forests and over numerous different rivers. After the second day of walking we arrived at what the map told us to be Waterfall Bluff, a particularly spectacular freshwater fall dropping directly into the sea. Roger and Olly took a look around the area and ran back with serious sparkles in their eyes. They had spotted a cave close to the as yet unviewed waterfall, and this was where we decided to spend the night.

The location of the cave and the magnificence of the atmosphere is extremely difficult to describe. From a huge sandstone cave directly above the ocean we were surrounded by a 100-meter waterfall on the right hand side and the roaring sea below us. I think that the general consensus was that this was the best night of the whole hike as the exposure to the elements and the bareness of life was not only a bit scary at times but also incredibly humbling.

On the third day we were reminded of the power of the Transkei tick. After stopping for lunch in a beautiful forest grove I glanced over my shoulder about an hour later only to come face to face with a back full of pin-head red ticks. They unfortunately stuck around (quite literally as they seem to do) for a few days and resurfaced in the form of a fever and extreme tiredness 11 days later. Thankfully not full blown tick bite fever, the week that I was ill for was not that pleasant and serves as a reminder to all hikers that sitting on Transkei grass is probably not as safe as the sand and should just be avoided.

That night we set up camp on the beach and decided to do watches throughout the night. The lights belonging to the local fisherman made us all a bit wary to sleep in case of theft and straws were drawn as to which lucky pair got the graveyard shift of 1 am to 2:30. Camel man Dan and Botanist Rog managed to win this one and the Old Brown Sherry, cards and late night snacks helped them get through. The night was

uninterrupted and in the morning we continued along with all belongings in pack.

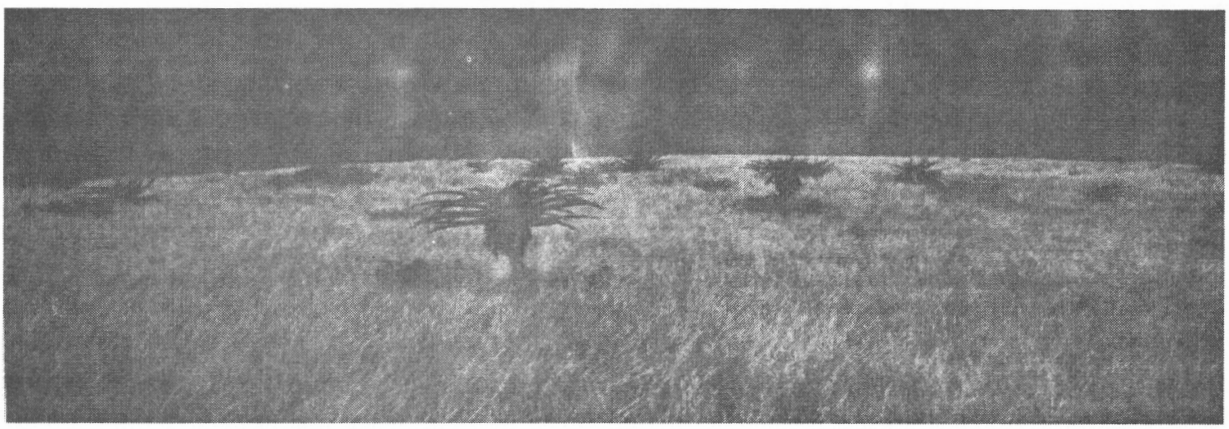
This was a day during which it was decided to head inland. The huts that we were looking for were supposedly inland and this was the logical reasoning behind the decision. Unfortunately, after a good half a day of walking we ended up on a sort of peninsular, surrounded by a deep, wide river on the one side and a mangrove swamp on the other. Instead of having to walk all the way back over the hill that we had just raced down Olly yelled over to the family-filled jetty just down the opposite river bank in a rather pleading and brilliantly desperate voice. Eventually, after 3 trips in a tiny little boat we were rescued from our dead-end island and deposited on the jetty of our Durban rescuer's family holiday house. They were fantastically helpful and did a further 3 trips down the river, transporting us to the huts along the beachfront.

After having passed *en route* the half-standing rondavels that had initially been intended for hikers such as ourselves, our expectations of the fourth nights huts were certainly not high. But when we arrived to bunk beds with mattresses, a table and warmth we were (literally) jumping up and down with joy.

After sleeping like kings we woke up for George's birthday on the 11 July, and in amongst the bully beef and Bar-Ones Daniel had carried a birthday candle all the way to present to the birthday boy. We walked for half the day and were met with disbelief at the unexpected sight of Port St Johns. After our time away from all the noise and hassle of modern life we had not prepared ourselves for this surprise, and pangs of disappointment were felt when large white buildings signified the end of our hike. We made our way towards the town and after our last lunch of provitas and cheese on the beach we came to the ferries that would take us across the river. R2 each and a race across the river saw us hit tarmack and the first thing that we did was visit the bottle store for a cold beer.

An afternoon on the beach saw us swimming and bargaining with the local traders over baskets, necklaces and straw hats and that night was spent again at Amapondo around the fire, waiting up for Jan's birthday on the 12.

The next morning after all saying our goodbyes (and swapping addresses, telephone numbers and making plans to meet up again) we left Port St Johns, so ending a fantastically incredible experience. Something as unique as this hike makes one understand why people walk across continents. Walking is addictive - the places you see, the sounds you hear, the people you interact with and the feelings you feel...not many things beat that.



The Port St. Johns to Coffee Bay Hike

11 - 16 July 1999

Greg Hutton-Squire

Leader: Richard Milne
Group: Alex Brooke, Nic Gibson, Iracema Hromnik, Steve Bretherick, Monique Ledesma, Gavin Greenwood, Sven Lammers, Carol Matthews,Megan Viljoen, Nick Milne and Greg Hutton-Squire

On arriving in the settlement of Port St. Johns we were greeted by a sight not unusual in tropical Africa thousands of kilometres away: wide, dusty roads boarded by "Coca-Cola" cafes and large palm trees, semi-naked children playing football and running alongside our car. The beach was white and empty, crystal blue waves tumbling onto it casually. As we rounded a corner we spotted a red bakkie surrounded by familiar looking types. Upon drawing to a halt greetings were exchanged with both our group and Olly's who had finished their hike earlier that day having come down from Msikaba.

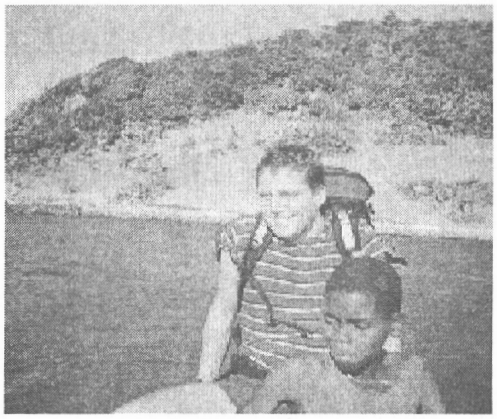
Continuing to the Silaka Nature Reserve, Rich booked us in and half the group set off to the huts a couple of k's away whilst Steve, Gavin and myself returned to the Backpackers where Olly and his group resided. No it wasn't in search of alcohol (although I found quite a bit as well as a babelicious Aussie barmaid) but someone who was keen to continue the trip down the coast. That someone was Carol and worries of food aside she thought it'd be great to spend another five or six nights roughing it – why do we do this?

The next morning was answer enough, we'd got to the huts in the dark so when dawn arrived we were really taken with the view. Below the rondavels was a small valley running down to a beach, opposite was a hillside dotted with bright aloes and long grass blowing in the wind. Stunning. As we made ourselves that first kick-start (a cuppa) the locals decided to try their luck, "Sweets, give me sweets" followed by their mothers with an array of bracelets, bowls and the like to sell us. Made of grass and colourful beads they were more than worth the measly fifty cents or two rand they were asking. The girls all crowded round to choose, the lads groaned thinking it a sign of what was to come – slow progress.

Eventually we got going, a helluva hill to start the hike with, straight up 652 metres. As we filed up the hill chatting some eagle-eyed person spotted dolphins below us (–in the sea not the valley) and it filled us with hope as to what else we might see. However on reaching the top we were plunged into thick undergrowth along a valley side emerging at last onto a dirt road that led into a rather smart resort. We strode over the heli-pad and well-kept lawns towards the pool, downing packs we took a breather. Rich went off to find a boat whilst we re-filled water bottles. I was thinking of joining Nic who'd dived into the pool when I saw my aunt and two young cousins chilling on the sun-loungers, a very pleasant surprise and good photo opportunity! Alex also knew some of the other guests - small world and all that.

Anyway Rich had got us aboard a hotel boat and we set off across the wide river, after skirting around some low hills we arrived onto our first long, deserted and beautiful beach. Boots off we all wandered along it, some chatting, some arguing about sport and some in silent appreciation of Mother Nature's work. Lunch at the end of the bay with good fun in the huge breakers was a necessity.

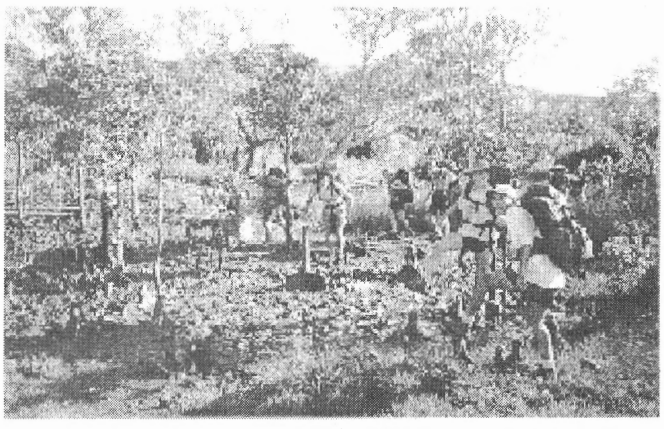
The Mngazana River prevented our progress any further until Rich persuaded a young piekenin to row over, they struck a deal of two bucks per person, (the same as at the hotel). Three daring souls clambered aboard the tiny boat and balanced themselves precariously amongst the gutted fish and assorted wooden contraptions, ready to abandon both boat and rucksacks if necessary and try their luck in the rushing tidal river mouth. The kid pulled hard at his oars though and they were safely across. He did it twice more before some village tough-guy noticed and roared over in his powered fishing boat to demand six rand per person, from those who were already across and those who weren't! After much debate we left him fuming, the kid smiling with his R24 and continued on our way. That night's huts (Mpande) were splendid, cared for by a big lady beaming from ear to ear we settled down around a roaring fire to swop stories and first impressions. The girls started a bit of habit by sleeping under the stars, for one reason or another most of the lads stayed under the spiders and snakes of the thatch.



Early start, waved off by the caretakers and up another hill, around it's crest again, under a tremendous heat considering the hour, into bush which was cooler, spent most of the day dodging dumb cattle. In the first village Iracema and Megan decided to hand out a few sweeties - BIG mistake. Although the rest of us were only ten feet away they were lost from sight, a forest of eager hands surrounded them in seconds, not all of them young either, even the grannies were in on it! It was reassuring to see them sharing their spoils though with late-comers. The camp was more secluded than the first with a private little path to the beach, to the left of which was an enormous dune. Obviously we had to conquer it in the name of UCT, this we did many times as rolling down its steep slope was brilliantly amusing.

More of us slept outside that night, in the morning there was a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday" for Alex who decided to turn twenty there as it was so beautiful! With her pack weight lessened by half a dozen bright balloons we started out, first obstacle for her to tackle was a barbed-wire fence. This was shortly followed by a patch of thorn bush once we'd paddled over a pretty pathetic river and persuaded some 'big-game fishermen' (the only big thing about them were their waistlines!) we were not mad and had chosen to do this voluntarily. Once up the hill we again saw dolphins, a huge school that Monique managed to see this time! On leaving a village we spotted a strange sight that must have really unnerved early explorers/ pioneers a few hundred years ago: half a dozen boys in their teens painted from head to foot in a dry, whitish clay, carrying spears and running hell for leather across our route into the bush. Unfortunately we decided a diversion to see the big wreck at Shark's Point would take too long so we continued along, usually ignoring the supposed "help" of youngsters due to an earlier one's deliberate attempt to lead us astray before demanding compensation.

It took forever to locate that night's huts at Hluleka. After a quick dip a delegation



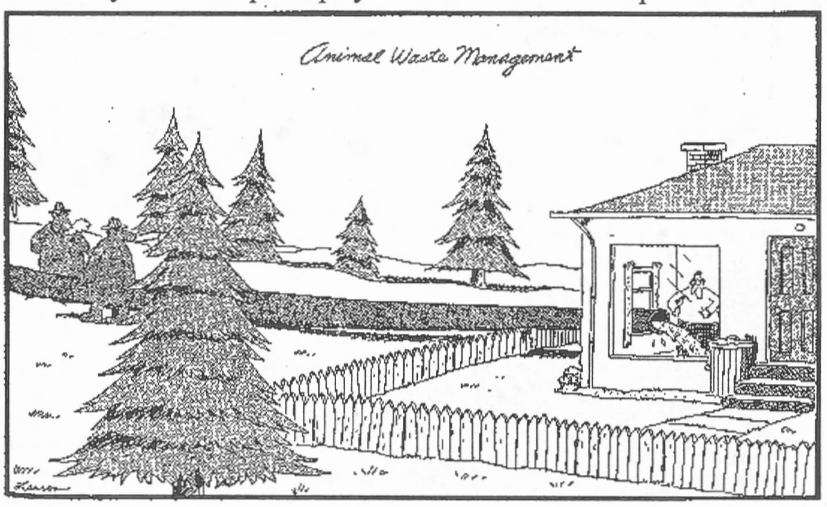
went off in search of a shop whilst Rich and I decided to run back to the big beach for a spot of body-surfing. We joined the shoppers up the hill in time to get a lift back on a passing bakkie. Once again Rich and I struggled to get a roaring log fire going only to see everyone remain huddled around a candle. They were sick of smelling like charcoal! Huh!

As it was Alex's B'day, the alcohol flowed freely and a massive quantity of goodies were consumed. For some reason Steve decided to provide the entertainment for the evening and so blew a gigantic fireball across our heads having filled his gob with meths, and so quickly did it happen cameras couldn't keep up. What was even more bizarre was what happened next. I had regaled people earlier with camping stories from school days and so felt obliged to prove them by taking a baked-bean tin half full of meths and pouring it over my left arm. This I then lit and held up high for all to marvel at.....for about 1.2 seconds before yelling like a man possessed and desperately trying to dowse the flames on the grass which also caught alight. Okay, I admit meths does burn, I'm still sure it worked in Std. 7 though. Again the cameras missed the moment although this time it was because everyone was dying of laughter.

On Thursday we stuck close to the coast before having to descend into thick bush which got muddy, and muddier and yet muddier until it occurred to us that it could be the infamous mangrove swamp last year's expedition had spoken of. It even had one or two crabs! Here the group split over which route was best, some opted for high altitude bundu-bashing whilst some of us were enjoying the squelching far too much. On reaching the Mtakatye River we traversed along rocks to find a suitable launch site, but after a kilometre we realised it was not about to get any better so jumped on in.

Much amusement was then had when on reaching the beach we saw the others all nervously testing the depth having finally escaped the jungle. A variety of methods were employed including, very cleverly, an inflatable lilo... with a leak—not clever but funny. Shortly afterwards whilst passing some holiday cottages Alex again met some girls she knew and everyone took the opportunity of refilling their water bottles in their house. They accompanied us along the beach although, much to the guys' disappointment they'd changed from bikinis to T-shirts and shorts. Nic persevered anyway which earned him the "Spader of the Hike" title, I think he's still waiting for the prize! During the lunch break we swam and slept in the sun, trying hard to ignore the gale-force winds. Some of us were eventually woken by a musical classic, that 1995 hit "Shosholaza" as performed by the local kids, very entertaining and not a bad effort. Things then took a turn for the worse when our girls completed the cultural exchange by dancing the bloody "Macarena" and then teaching the children—may God help Africa.

Our last huts were in a stunning spot, nestled under forested hills and looking over a stream onto the beach. The caretaker here was a bit of wheeler-dealer and promptly convinced us to part with our



money. We were relieved when he returned with beer, in quarts! Some of us watched the local footie teams giving each other a bashing, one team had 14 players whilst the other seemed to have about 17, one chap was busy commentating on it all in extremely fast Xhosa to no-one in particular until he too joined in.

Friday arrived dark and early, i.e. we rose before dawn. Off we went up yet another hill to start the day, the girls STILL chatting away as if they'd only just met after five years. A lot of the morning was spent moving rapidly along the rocky coast which was fun, checking out the sea-urchins, star-fish and shells as we went. The first river crossing (Mdumbi) appeared far earlier than is polite and none of us were too keen to get wet, and moving in from the coast everyone wrapped their packs up tight in plastic. The river was rising fast and I decided to cross at the mouth where, according to university geography lecturers, it should be shallower. Pack on top of head I stepped out, shuffling forward I was quite worried by the pull of the water, it got deeper and deeper, only my head and arms were above the seriously fast moving water. Looking back upstream I realised with some trepidation that if I did get pulled out to sea no-one would notice as they were also busy crossing. That gives one determination like nothing else, and with renewed effort I got out of the current. Dropping my bag higher up the beach I saw Sven had followed. As he neared the centre of the mouth a huge wave tore in and swamped him, pack and all. It was a few desperate seconds before I could see him. Having run back into the water I helped get his rucksack up the beach. Phew, what a start to the day!

Trekking on we were dry before the end of the beach and so up we went, past a Mission hospital and down on to our last long piece of strand. We were on a mission to get to Coffee Bay now so no-one dawdled. Copious amounts of shouting raised an old chap in a boat with which to cross the wide Umtata river although Gavin and Steve enjoyed a last swim, much to the locals horror (they caught a big-ish shark there in 19-voetsak). It was then a pretty routine march through bush and along dirt-tracks, past the world-class golf course into Coffee Bay. A swim and lunch were enjoyed quietly by a now exhausted team before we piled into a taxi for the long journey to Umtata.

That evening our memories of a superb trip were unfortunately tainted by the hijacking of Sven and Nic which caused a lot of



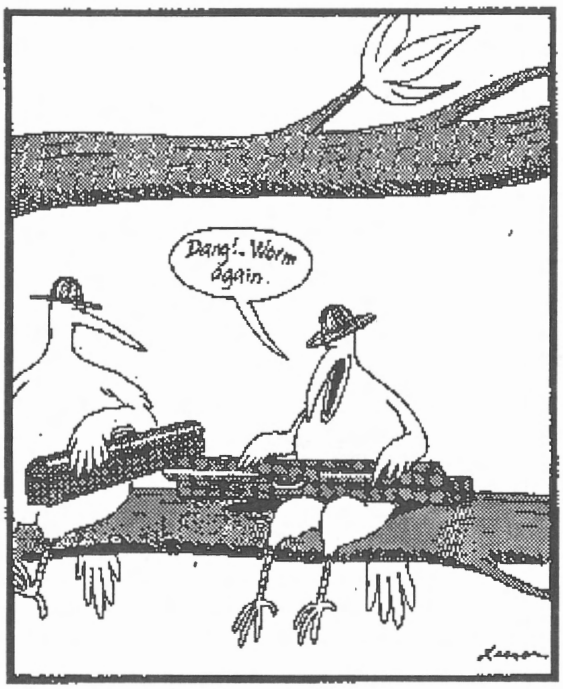
unnecessary stress and time wasted with bureaucrats, however the crafty acting of four of our party (as two couples) ensured all ten of us (Megan and Monique having caught a bus home) had space to sleep in the "Shell Travel-Inn" family-room in good student style. We even got a choccie bar each for breakfast the next day!

Wit Els Kloof: A Descent from Waaihoek Peak

Reprinted from the MCSA Journal No. 41 of 1938

Chas Kaplan

Our party – M. Fish, H. Green, H. Wyner and the writer – left Town on Old Year's Night, 1937, and proceeded by car to the last farm in the Waboomsrivier district. Early next morning, New Year's Day, we started the ascent of Waaihoek Peak *via* the Central Buttress route and although our packs were heavy we made good progress and reached the summit beacon at noon. Skirting around the rim of the Waaihoek Basin we charged across the intervening country and actually climbed to the Jan Du Toit's Ridge Pinnacles before turning back. We were, by now, very tired but as dusk was already upon us we almost ran back, slipping and stumbling through the bush, until just as darkness overtook us we reached our camp again – deadbeat.



Construction birds at lunch

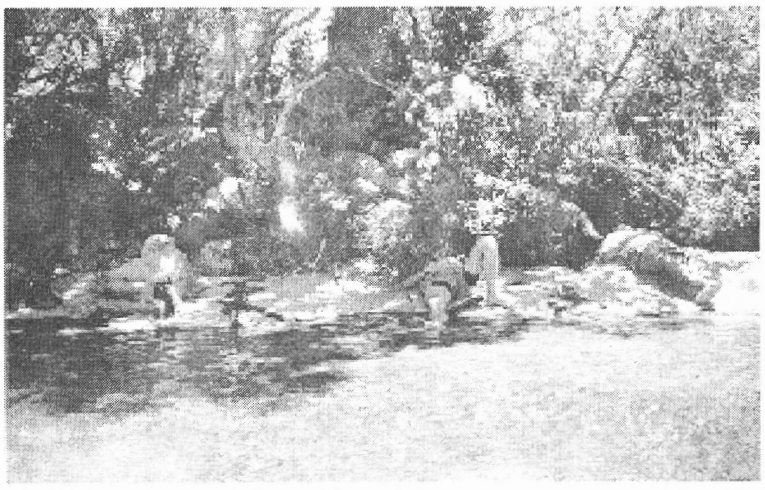
Next morning broke clear and warm and we were early astir. Shortly before eight we shouldered our heavy rucksacks once more and started the descent into Wit Els Kloof down a long, stony ridge just to the right (looking down) of the main kloof. Our immediate objective was a prominent spur jutting out into the kloof some distance down, and to reach this we crossed and recrossed the kloof a couple of times until, after about two hours' going, we were able to descend into the kloof proper. The descent was not easy – we had to climb down a steep wall on little else than thick grass and bush. We landed in the kloof at a most picturesque spot. The place was no more than twenty feet wide, and the walls on either side, covered with a beautiful array of flowers, towered up for some distance. A huge tree stood in the center of the stream-bed and the rushing water eddied and swirled about it, and the light and shadow combined to create a most remarkable effect.

Since leaving our overnight camp we had dropped about two thousand feet. We changed into tackies and then started down the kloof by jumping from rock to rock – no mean feat with heavy rucksacks – dodging huge boulders and wading through the pools where necessary. We had not gone far before we came across a grand waterfall, fully a hundred-and-fifty feet in height and dropping sheer into a huge pool.

Good progress was made for a couple of hours and then the kloof became very

narrow – almost a cleft in the rock walls now rising impressively for hundreds of feet and effectively preventing the sunlight from reaching us. In the kloof it was gloomy and chilly, and very soon we reached a long pool of unknown depth and here we called a council of war. If we were unable to get across this pool it meant that we had to retrace our steps for some distance and then get out of the kloof and up the slopes somewhere further back. This we wanted to avoid as far as possible, so one of us swam across to reconnoitre, and reported two other such pools. Now, besides the difficulty of getting the bags across these pools we had a non-swimmer in the party. During the discussions not much notice was taken of him, someone murmuring, "Oh! We'll just have to drag him across."

We discovered three 3-foot logs and these were immediately turned into a raft, all of us tearing up our towels and vests for the purpose. Tying on the rope the first man swam across, a hundred-and-twenty feet of rope going out. We tied the raft to the other end of the rope and the non-swimmer jumped into the pool and grabbed the raft. The rope was pulled taut, and a miracle happened! He was got across the first pool without even getting his hair wet. The first man now swam back dragging the raft behind him, and then one bag was tied on to the raft and pulled across. The rest of the party took turns in swimming to and fro for the raft and it proved to be a most tiring affair. Despite all precautions every bag sank under water and the contents became very wet and heavy.



The crossing of the first pool safely accomplished, we turned our attention to the next one. This proved to be a hundred-and-sixty feet in length and was conquered in similar fashion to the first.

We had spent a great deal of time getting over these two pools and as the rays of the sun could not reach us we were shivering with cold. The final pool of the series was a hundred-and-fifty feet long but a rock in the center enabled us to overcome it in two stretches. It had taken us three-and-half hours to cover barely two hundred yards and when we recalled that we had allowed ourselves only two days to traverse the kloof we realised that we were far behind schedule.

The kloof now widened a little so, abandoning the raft, we pushed on and our progress was unhindered for a short distance. It was not long before another deep pool was reached, but as we could not see the far end of this one we decided to climb up the right-hand wall (looking down), above which we ascended a very steep slope. The afternoon sun was scorching, and the atmosphere stifling, but fortunately we soon managed to get back into the kloof on the other side of the pool that had baulked us. The kloof was now open, except for bush, for as far as we could see and the leader started to force the pace a bit. Running and jumping from rock to rock, and wading and splashing through shallow pools we advanced rapidly for two-and-a-half hours until at 7:30 pm we were once more stopped by another deep pool. With one accord we threw down our packs and if anyone had suggested carrying on there would have been a mutiny in the party.

Very early next

day we were on our way, for we had to get to Mitchell's Pass by evening and we had a long day's work before us. To avoid the pool of the previous night we struck up the slopes of Bertsberg for about fifteen hundred feet. The slope was steep and the bush thick, thorny and annoying; the morning was swelteringly hot and our packs, still sodden, were very heavy and soon we were all perspiring freely and breathing heavily. Once we had gained height we kept to the "concertina-like" slopes for over three hours so as to avoid some of the many bends of the tortuous kloof. During this period it was just one continuous bush fight until we reached a long upward grass slope leading to a shoulder beneath the middle turret of Schurfteberg. A recent fire had burnt out the bush here and the black dust got on to our clothes, into our eyes and down our throats. From the crest of the shoulder we climbed down the rocks for a short distance and then slithered and stumbled down the loose slope back into the kloof.

We had a short rest and lunch and then carried on once more. We had hardly been under way for ten minutes when another huge pool confronted us. We could not afford to waste any time by swimming it so we climbed up the left side (again looking down) of the kloof up a series of long rock slabs until we had ascended about a thousand feet. From here, in order to reach a diminutive nek, we had to climb a rather difficult crack and so tired were we that it was all we could do to struggle up. From the nek we managed to get into the kloof again, but not without considerable difficulty – a remarkable diagonal cleft in the rock wall coming to our rescue when we were at our wits' end for a way down. Our main difficulties were now over, as the rest of the kloof was comparatively open and after another three hours' fast going we reached the junction of Wit Els with the main Mitchell's Pass stream.

Our car was still on the farm at Waboomsrivier and we were many, many miles away from it. How we eventually got there is another story but the Government co-operated to some extent through a passing G.P.O. van.

With thanks to Olly Leinberger

We as a nation, valuing our unique heritage, should not allow it [Table Mountain] to be spoiled and despoiled, and should look upon it as amongst our most sacred possessions, part not only of the soil, but of the soul of South Africa. For centuries to come, while civilisation lasts on this sub-continent, this national monument should be maintained in all its' natural beauty and unique setting. It should be symbolic of our civilisation itself, and it should be our proud tradition to defend it to the limit against all forces of man or nature who disfigure it. – General Jan Smuts, speech delivered on Table Mountain in 1923

Exploring the friction coefficient of ice at 2000m altitude

A practical approach

David Gwynne-Evans Shows Us How Not To Ski

PROLOGUE

Frantically searching around for ski boots that would fit me in the early morning, I gave up and opted for wellies. This was my third attempt at facing the elements this morning without getting cold - and the sun

had just come up. My first attempt consisted of bare feet, hat, shirt and gloves. That was a resounding failure. My next attempt, the use of wet woolly slippers and gloves over plastic packets and someone else's polartec jacket, allowed me to step outside and take some hasty snaps of the rising sun, before becoming a proteinaceous block of ice.

THE ACTION

Now here is the bit we have all been waiting for - drama... but wait. The suspense. The wind whistled outside as I slipped softly into my ominous wellington boots. Words whispered, hung like fresh drool on the freezing wind, as I opened the door to the unknown and stepped outside.

The new day bloomed golden as the stubborn clouds begrudgingly revealed the glowing globe rising above the ice covered scenery. Golden linings and sleepy calm gave no hint of the epic tragedy which was soon to unfold outside Hoare Hut. I reached the intended ski spot without mishap.

Selecting the stretch of snow that would allow for minimum disruption, I positioned myself and prepared for the fifteen metre ski run, that I would undertake. The snow reduced to ice by the night's rain slipped effortlessly past underfoot as I gently pushed off to begin my descent. This is "Ultimate Glissading" - no skis - just size nine feet to remain upright. Negotiating old footprints embedded in the snow, I remained on my feet as I picked up speed down the shallow slope.

According to my calculations, I should stop just about at the ski jump. Of course, not being an A - rated physicist my calculations were bound to be out, and having skilfully retained my upright stance until reaching the jump I decided to come to a stop. However, ice is known to have particularly low friction coefficients, and gumboots were probably not originally designed for ice skating, so try as I might, I could not slow down.

Fear and a determination to stop replaced most other thoughts as I skimmed towards a rock without any control. The rock did little to slow my descent, although it made a first class ramp. As my feet connected they slipped up and over the rock, then came my coccyx which propelled me haphazardly into the air. Legs and arms flailing, I landed backwards and upside down. I felt not unlike a flipped tortoise as I gazed with trepidation over my shoulder at a terrifying sight. A hundred and fifty metres of almost uninterrupted slope ending in an icy stream lay before me. Only a large boulder stood between me and certain death.

Heading for the rock took on a new meaning, as much to my dismay I realised that head and rock can only mean disaster. The images flashed before my eyes: broken head - die in snow; broken neck - instant death, concussion - die shortly afterwards. At a guestimated speed of sixty km/h I recall thinking that my only way of surviving this would be to absorb the blow with my legs.

As my straight legs connected with the rock two sickening bone-cracking sensations emanated from my back, sending searing pain up my spine accompanied by two cracking sensations along my spine and an impact on my coccyx that would have put the jurassic meteorite to shame. Then my legs folded, sending me hurtling into the rock. I recall the sensation of smacking into that cold hard rock like a rag doll - and then nothing but pain, darkness and thought. When I opened my eyes moments later I was shocked to discover that I was once again on the move. As with all good dramas, the climax was still to come.

Below me I could just make out the semi-iced stream flowing about 100 metres away down an even steeper incline. I realised that this stream spelt certain death to those unaccustomed to breathing underwater. Thus the options as I ricocheted off the rock and towards the stream became ever more

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grim. Presuming I survive the impact at the bottom, am I to freeze or drown in the watery shallows, or make a heroic effort in my paralysed state to climb out, only to slip back in, until my energy levels and will power succumb to the inevitable?

The next few moments mercifully remain hazy to memory, but when I opened my eyes I was alive and stationary. There was a knowing empty feeling that I was helpless, in a barren landscape, on cold ice and for all I knew paralysed. My back was agony as I lay and called - my voice being absorbed into the open whiteness of the landscape. After an eternity it became evident that no-one had seen me go down and I endeavoured to crawl towards the hut. I flexed my hands, then wiggled my toes - thankfully I was not paralysed. Excruciatingly painful as it was I moved onto my knees and crawled forward towards the hut, ignoring the possibility of slipping into a higher dimension.

It was then that I noticed a crimson spot amidst the white ice. It didn't take long for me to realise that my hand was split asunder and exposed a cut about 4 centimetres long, across my hand, 5 millimetres wide and a centimetre deep.

After some metres I saw a trickle of water next to a rock and for the first time realised how thirsty I was. I chuckled to myself as I realised that fainting while drinking could result in the Darwin Award for drowning. After stomaching the numbing liquid, I obtained a tentative purchase above the rock. I knelt and shouted up towards the hut with renewed vigour. I knew the hut was only 150 metres or so from my position, so why was no-one responding? I was near to tears with despair and the effort of calling, when I saw a moving spot far up the mountain. I thought I was hallucinating, but sure enough it resolved itself into a distant figure. Mustering all the energy I could I screamed upwards, waving my hands in the traditional distress signal.

THE RESCUE

"Are you at all hurt?" my new hero Paul shouted. As I watched, this ski-instructor in vivid red clothes descended, weaving from side to side as if sailing over the finest powder snow. He stopped in a flurry of ice and noise a short distance from me. After ascertaining my injuries he made me as warm as he could and then went back for help.

It seemed ages that I was lying alone above that little outcrop. I knew what lay below me should I slip further. I knew that I was damn cold and that my back and coccyx hurt like hell. After about twenty minutes people started trickling down to lend me a hand like confused ants in a fridge.

While I lay prostrate and shivering on the hard ice, people were hard at work chipping footholds up the ice. I was given a flask of hot chocolate, but mercilessly allowed only small sips. A trench had been dug next to me in order to place the stretcher, which was brought up from Pell's Hut some 20 minutes walk away. Despite a broken sled that occurred while dragging the ancient relic over a boulder, the stretcher survived to toboggan Paul Leroy down a slope, and provide a final historic rescue.

After what was probably an hour, I was finally lifted off the ice by about six people and transferred to the stretcher. My pain at the time was immeasurable, but surviving the manoeuvre I was now on the stretcher and it was not long before it was hauled painstakingly upwards. I felt like a block destined for the pyramids as the team of mountaineers propelled me to the hut.

Arriving in the hut was not without ceremony as people crowded round the doors and steps, lifting me up, giving words of encouragement to me, and the men carrying me. Without these fine men who risked their lives to save me I would not have made it up alive. As it was, numerous beautiful angels that could only have been

heaven sent set about massaging the life back into my feet and providing my numbed hands with coke bottles filled with hot water to try to restore some semblance of colour to the otherwise grey fingers. Kim Prescott the local 6th year medic, aided by Kirsty, was unfazed as she dealt with the wounds - minor compared to her daily experiences in the trauma unit. My thanks to all in the hut that assisted in any way.

THE CHOPPER RIDE

For those of you who have never been in a helicopter, let me tell you how much fun it was. The pilot landed expertly just outside the hut, and out came two authentic-looking Camel Men. After questions they produced a stretcher which they slid under me. This had a gap running along my spine, so for the first time in seven hours I felt vaguely comfortable. The reason for the gap became painfully apparent as a metal arm swung out from the helicopter which slid into the gap of the stretcher. Then they tightened the straps which bound me to the bar, forcing me down onto it. The pain de resistance was after my thanks and good-byes had been sent to all, and the engine started up - the entire helicopter started vibrating and I gloomily expected my entire ride in this fashion. Fortunately once in the air, about five seconds later, the excruciating vibration was damped. Unfortunately all I could see of the mountains were the peaks floating by. The slap of the propellers is about as loud as the beat in a dance club, albeit not as repetitive.

THE HOSPITAL

After about half an hour we landed at N1 City Hospital. The bouncing recurred briefly, before we touched down. Once inside the trauma ward, I was questioned and given words of comfort. I was then wheeled off to the X-Ray Department, where I waited outside for another half hour. At last the door opened, and I was wheeled under a large telescoping X-Ray machine, resembling a souped-up version of a dentist's light. For the next forty five minutes the doctor rushed around taking photos of everything from my waist to my mouth (huh?).

Some 25 x-rays later, I was once again lying in the Trauma Unit. My doctor wheeled a little table next to me and positioned my hand on the table. He then whipped out 4 syringes which he consequently thrust into my open palm. He then put five gut stitches into the depths of my wound. There was little pain, but I could feel the tugging as he pulled the gut tight. 10 nylon stitches were sewn, to pull the skin together.

THE DIAGNOSIS

I was informed that I had compression fractures of the 11th and 12th thoracic vertebrae. This meant that they had been squashed and were noticeably smaller (and more painful) than before. My coccyx was also shattered. The doctors prescribed 2 months confined to bed (back or sides), with a few minutes every two hours to go to the latrine and get the blood flowing to my back. I later found out that my coccyx was not fractured but merely bruised, which is little comfort as the pain is still - 7 days later - exceedingly sore.

My mother asked me the other day what I have learnt from this - am I going to take life slower now, not take as many risks? The reply: "Well mum, next time I go skiing I'll be sure not to wear wellie boots on ice, and to use ski gloves."

I guess some people are genetically destined to be adrenaline junkie risk takers.

But perhaps what I have learnt is to make the most of life, as one never knows when chance may intervene. I therefore prescribe a strict weekly dose of Mountain and Ski Club activities for lasting memories, friends... and injuries?

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Kubla Khan

PEER'S CAVE

5 August 1999

Carel Haumann

Leader: Steve Bretherick
Group: Steve, Jacou, Carel, Mabelo, Briony, Grant, Steve, Ross, Lefa, Jayson, Boy, Emile, Grant (surnames blown away by the wind, apologies for any omissions).
The info centre: bad weather; laziness; memories of trodding through wet grass; steaming cars with frustrated climbers; dripping rock. But then there was the cell-phone and Ianni (on a caving meet at Kalk Bay only a kilometre from Peer's Cave) ASSURED Steve of clear skies. So we went ahead and the weather turned out to be



"Well, the Sullivans are out on their tire again."

brilliant. What more can I say?

Briony joined us with 4 students from LEAF college and this was to be a first for the MSC (to my knowledge) - a "development" rock meet. Actually it was combined with a regular rock meet but the plan was that Steve would take care of the regulars while I focused on the LEAF group.

Well, as is customary the 9 (Visions of Cosmic Doom) was rigged to start off with. Belaying, abseiling, lowering off and the whole toot was demonstrated and enjoyed. Much excitement and much fun. Then the 14 (Africa Anything) which caused a bit more exertion. With a little help from their friends in the form of a very tight top rope the route was conquered.

Lunch time saw only the foolhardy remain behind. I convinced Steve to go and do 'Nothing like Uranus' 24 (reread if you don't catch it). I insisted that 'it was only around the corner'. As Steve was to discover, definitions of 'corner' vary and it was quite a slog. Well the route - yes - quite a goon-show I'd say. The rock was slippery, etc. etc. Even on top-rope I could only manage half the moves. What a disgrace! At least I've got something to work on.

Well, all in all a marvellous day!

Mike Scott on solo climbing in 1958: "Although the occasional inspired 'whizz-kid' like Dave Davies can shyly go round opening G3 on everything he touches, most of the hard lads fare better in packs."

Magical Mountain Goat Tour

7 August 1999

Richard Milne

Leader: Warwick Board
Present: Richard Milne, David Hartley, Wolraad Euvrard, Cathy Vise, Heather Perry, Heather Grey, Iracema Hromnik, Tracy de Villiers, [Meja? Miesh?]
Although the morning of the hike was dull and overcast, we were heartened by the fact that we didn't have to shiver it out at the info centre as our leader, the esteemed Warwick S. Board, was on time this year not having had a thesis to hand in. Everyone else was just as punctual, and we were soon in a position to start, with cars parked at Newlands Forestry Station and at the base of Kloof Corner Ridge.

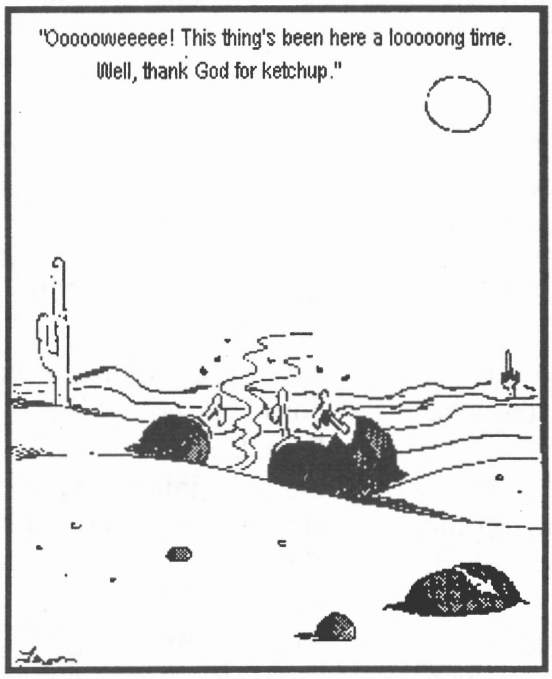
As we set off to follow the pylons up the side of Table Mountain, the party (of which the majority were girls – it seems this hike has lost its hard core status, much to the pleasure of the aesthetes amongst us) soon shook off the early morning chill. After the initial surprise of going from strolling on the path to scrambling up a chain all of a sudden, everyone began to warm and wake up as we got into the fairly easy scrambling and clambering that marked the start of the walk, up through Pinnacle Variations.

Things began to get a little more serious as we wandered into the mist. We couldn't climb the second chain because it and the surrounding rocks were too damp and slippery. Of course, to get to the chain we had to climb up a section of these selfsame dodgy rocks, with the fog hiding the full extent of the massive drop below us. A little chimneying out onto another exposed face and we were through that section. Starting to chill, with numb hands, we were off to tackle Right Arrow and Arrow Face frontal.

This was a pleasant diversion, once we got out of the "rain" dripping off the overhangs above us. More scrambling in and about caves with plenty of scope to chimney across the rock face. After this, we exited onto the side of the mountain to find our way across to 770 Descent and into Platteklip Gorge. On the way, we all renewed our intimate acquaintance with that horrid misnomer for *Clyphoria*, Climber's Friend. Rather a long reunion, as we missed the path initially and started off on some other traverse, necessitating a bush-whack, slipping and baling down the side of the mountain to get back on track. This was when the weather gods indulged themselves in a bit of gentle mocking, tantalisingly pulling back wisps of clouds to reveal a sun-bathed city below.

Got down 770 traverse, only to put our heads down to plod up the extended staircase that is Platteklip. Once up at the top, we whiled away a few minutes trying to identify the animals on our choccy biscuits and having a bite to eat. After lunch, we bid goodbye to Wolraad, who was dressed rather smartly for what was turning out to be a rather damp walk around Table Mountain. He was off to a birthday party in Kirstenbosch, and so we watched as he was swallowed up by the mist, heading for Skeleton Gorge via Echo Valley.

The rest of the party now set off for Maclear's beacon. Running the risk of hyperbole, I think it would be appropriate to use the nautical term "charted a course for the beacon" here as the ground was saturated, the wind was howling at our backs propelling us onward and we had no sight of land, thanks to the mist. We got to the beacon, waited around for all of 0.25 seconds to savor our achievement and then hurried off to find Ledges, all of us looking like Kenny in our Dri-Macs. After casting round awhile and sloshing through some exceptionally boggy patches, we arrived at the top of Ledges.



Upper pitch passed without incident. People started stressing for Ledges proper as this was extremely slippery. After three people got down, we had worked out a basic sequence of moves. Confidence levels dropped slightly, though, as Heather Gray slipped off a meter above the ground. Dave and I were hovering around, pretending that we would be able to catch people, helping her to place her feet and so on, when all of a sudden she ricocheted off me and bounced, coccyx first, off some rocks lying on the ground. Although the shakes were more evident now in the descenders, with Warwick acting as a human ladder there were no further incidents. Stopping briefly to admire our hoendervleis and compare the various shades of yellow and purple we were turning, we headed off for the Saddle.

At this point the hike became more pleasant. We dropped out of the clouds, and had more interesting caves, chimneys and corkscrew scrambles to negotiate. This got the circulation going again. Shortly after this, we hit the path, and had a very pleasant stroll across the face of the mountain back to the lower cable station. So we arrived back at the cars, proud of what we had achieved that day, our memories already glossing over the more unpleasant and harrowing bits. A memorable hike and a credit to Warwick's abilities that it passed off without serious incident.

Harpoons are still found in the desert. These were water people. Even today, caravans look like a river. Still, today it is water who is the stranger here. Water is the exile, carried back in cans and flasks, the ghost between your hands and your mouth... In the desert you celebrate nothing but water.

Michael Ondaatje, <u>The English Patient</u>

Romping Through Silvermine

8 August 1999

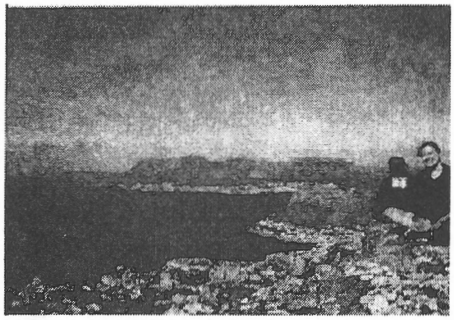
Wolraad Euvraad



Leader: Wolraad Euvrard

With scattered showers looming, this attempt at the splendid Silvermine Reserve looked dubious! The adage that making the decision is the hardest part seemed to hold; once on the path the weather just seemed to get better and like a curtain the clouds parted to show spectacular views overlooking False Bay.

This being my first official meet as leader, it was with a certain amount of trepidation that I led the way. Our first way-point was Junction Pool, from where we diverged from the jeep track to make a detour via an interesting cave I had found on my recce. From there we made our way to the main track to head off to the bottom of Spes Bona Valley along the seaward shoulder of the mountain. The extensive damage caused by yet another fire to the region was striking – currently I estimate about a third of the reserve must be charred and burned. This made the ascent of Spes Bona Valley all the more breathtaking – the valley is a grove of old and gnarled trees, with moss and decomposing leaves everywhere, reminiscent of a Tolkien novel.



Our lunch stop was atop a ridge providing us with an excellent view of False Bay, Fish Hoek and the Peninsula. Lunchtime, time to share experience and riddles (how long is a Chinaman?), not to mention mum's pre-packed lunch that someone had brought along. The wind soon drove us on to complete our round trip, via the Amphitheatre and Echo Valley, which some just couldn't resist testing out.

A short stop at Silvermine Waterfall, a debate on the ethics of parenthood and then we headed back to the car park, a bunch of thoroughly satisfied people.

Had we lived I would have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance and courage of my companions, which would have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our bodies must tell the tale. – Captain Robert Falconer Scott, from the diary of his trip to Antarctica, 1911

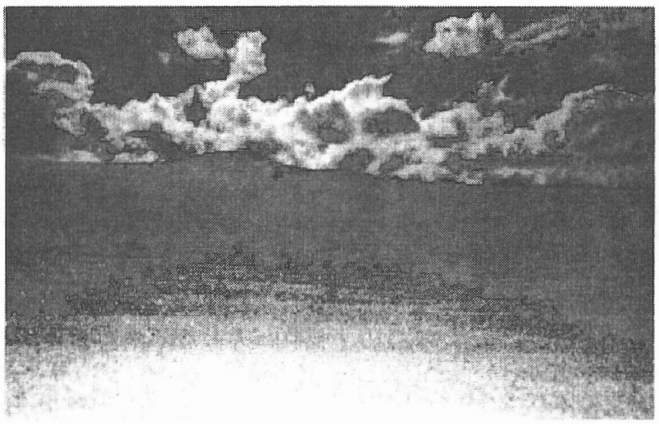
Dikkop Trail

Sunday 25 August

Megan Little

Leader: Kevin Iles

Unbeknown to most UCT students, Koeberg Power Station is situated a mere 30 km from the university and is surrounded by 2200 hectares of unspoilt natural veld. Nine of us had the opportunity of exploring this beautiful terrain on Sunday, the 25th July which, to our relief, was a perfect day for hiking. We arrived at about 10 am and were soon tramping amongst the strandveld.



Our first challenge was to scale the highest peak – an awesome 71.5m above sea level! Of course photos had to be taken as proof of our great feat before we headed down to the "hut" for one of our many lunch stops – we have our priorities straight! We had a lovely view of the pale cliffs, pristine beach and inviting sea with Table Mountain in the background. We headed down to the beach and walked along the coast for about 4km before heading back amongst the dunes.

Unfortunately we didn't see too much of the wildlife in the area. The only buck seen were the bontebok and they grazed at the entrance to the power station. We were glad to note that they all had 2 eyes, 4 legs 1 tail etc....! We arrived back at the cars at 2:30 pm and all agreed it had been an excellent hike – well worth it and a perfect way to spend a Sunday morning.

Always Take The Weather With You!

Tsitsikamma Trail

5 – 12 September 1999

Ruth Woudstra

OK, so here it is. A German, a Canadian, a Frenchwoman, a retired schoolteacher who has perfected the art of speaking Hebrew and three South Africans are walking through the Tsitsikamma forest. What are they doing? I don't want to let the cat out of the bag or anything here, but as far as I can remember, they were... hiking. So much for a good joke! The Tsitsikamma Trail stretches from Nature's Valley to the Storms River Bridge, and makes for the ultimate Garden Route experience.

Hiking an average of 13 kilometres a day made the hike very enjoyable, yet there was no time for being too relaxed - the rain had to be beaten! But going at superspeed between Blaauwkrantz and Keurboshut, Heuningbos and Sleepkloofhut paid off. The afternoons were free for swimming - if you were out of your mind, as some of us

were - as well as adjust-your-backpack sessions and catching up on dear sleep lost during some competitions and reading sessions of the night before. A few great meals were shared, Samora being the unmistakable king of the cooking corner and David Cole having perfected the art of measuring / weighing each and every square inch of food for a perfect diet. I have also learnt a very important lesson. Never get excited about putting a 'surprise' into your chocolate mousse pudding. To avoid questions like, "Is it a doob?" tell the receivers right at the beginning that the surprise is marshmallow.

After four nights of sleeping in the same hut (well that's what it felt like, the interior decorating and exterior were all the same, and if they weren't, we made them so - so much for kicking daily habits and exploring new ways of sleeping), we went off home. But not without stopping at the awe-inspiring Storms River Mouth where the suspension bridge was *nearly* destroyed by seven unknown hoolies and where a stunning hike was ended off with viewing dolphins and whales. Thank you Roger for taking over from Ollybol at such short notice and leading a superb hike.

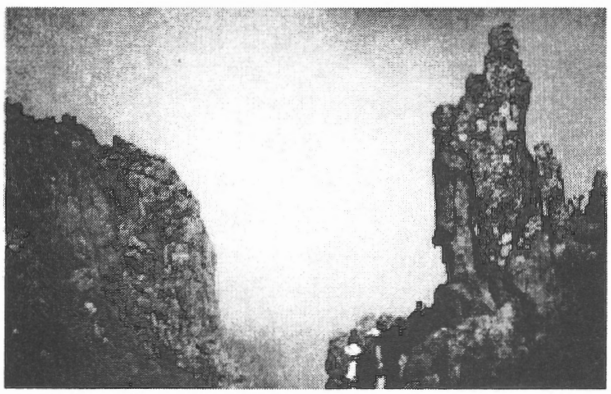
Discovering the Ambience of Arangieskop

9 - 10 September

Lorien Kee

Leader: Richard Milne

During the September holidays I thought I would make my guest appearance at one of the Mountain and Ski Club hikes. Little did I know that when deciding to go on a hike one must not forget to notice the fine print



at the extreme bottom of the page which states the difficulty of the hike. This was one of those hikes that only the fittest and bravest dare to tackle. Pity I only found out about this after we had arrived at the start of the hike.

Unprepared to do this by myself I dragged along a friend who also had never experienced the challenges of a Mountain and Ski Club hike. We decided that we would give it our best and tackle whatever lay before us with optimism and strength. Our first downfall was our wake-up the first morning, at 5 o'clock might I add, probably the earliest I have ever got up this entire year - that's when the swearing and cursing began.

We all met at the UCT visitor's centre and had a brief introduction to all the budding climbers who looked like they had been awake for at least half the morning so far, raring to go. We then set off to Robertson, a town about 2 hours outside of Cape Town where, at the foot of the mountains, our hike began. With ancient old back packs and as little squashed inside them as possible to make the weight lighter we started our hike.

Apparently we only climbed 400 meters in the first 6 km, which just shows how steep it was. Well, with occasional stops for food and water there was time to observe the view which was fantastic. The colours of the fields below and the sky were wonderful even though the day had started out with

slight drizzle. It was a cool day and actually perfect weather to climb in as one didn't get too hot or too cold.

After about 8 hours of hiking we reached the summit to bé welcomed by small hail stones, at first, and then snow. Luckily we reached our hut just as the snow started to come down quite heavily. For my friend it was the first time he had seen snow and was amazed by its feeling and the sound it made when walked on.

The hut was enchanting and very homely and although we could not get the fire to work properly and kept on being suffocated by carbon monoxide, we ended up having a wonderful evening. Although the temperature outside was about 0°C and inside only slightly warmer, Richard proceeded to walk around in shorts and didn't feel the cold at all whilst the rest of us huddled around the fire drastically trying to get some warmth. The evening was enjoyed by all and was definitely an eye-opener to the way things are done when out with the "Mountain and Ski club gang".

Old Brown Sherry was brought out (along with "caramel in a can") which I was soon taught was known as "OB's" and then the extremely rude jokes said every now and then, just blurted out I suppose to shock and make a statement - they certainly did! Slowly everyone drifted off to sleep. I woke up in the middle of the night freezing cold frantically tried to find socks to put on my hands and extra jerseys. I found out then why everyone had huge backpacks: "expect the unexpected". Well I certainly hadn't expected snow.

Next morning was met with Richard sprinting down the mountain side to see which was the best route home. We decided that up was the only way. After putting on three layers of socks and covering them with a plastic packet so as not to get your feet wet (a trick I was taught by Dave) two pairs of pants and three jerseys I was prepared to venture out into the snow.

The climb down was hair-raising. There was ice everywhere and climbing in tackies is not the best for icy weather. I seriously thought any minute now we would experience a "Cliff Hanger" death or something to that effect where we would be clutching on for dear life to what little bushes were exposed. But after the ice everything was great. Occasional stops to soothe our aching feet and to eat icicles were wonderful, and although most of the "gang" sprinted down half the mountain (practising for the gun run I was told) I took a leisurely stroll and admired all the beauty along the way.

It was a great experience and I only wish I had participated in more hikes before the toughest of them all, not because I needed experience (although that too) but just to experience the beauty of this area as well as the company of the people and of course OB's!

A Skiing Glory Story

For the second time this year the Mountain and Ski club could justify calling themselves a ski club. Snow fell on the Hex Mountains towards the end of the vac. Hundreds of members flocked towards the Hoare Hut with dreams of carving up the slopes, building snowmen and throwing snowballs. This weekend the hut became home to over 30 people, some who stayed 3 nights, others who only walked up for the day. But everyone who walked up will have an epic story of how they struggled through blizzard conditions and how they only just found the hut before they were turned into icicles and lost appendages to frostbite. But this story is not one of torturous ascents and

awesome skiing and boarding, but one of a bloody awful descent.
On Monday morning there were seven people still at the hut. These seven people carried eight bags of rubbish, five pairs of broken skis, gas cylinders and lost property down the mountain with them. It was undoubtedly the slowest and heaviest descent I have ever done from Hoare Hut. But before you start feeling guilty about leaving your shit for others to carry down for you, don't worry. These seven people had lots of time to stretch and warm up their walking muscles while doing the washing up, cleaning of the hut, putting skis away, refilling of water bottles and gas lamps and hundreds of other little jobs which other people couldn't be bothered to do.

Oh, it wasn't your mess was it? You arrived late on Saturday night and didn't eat dinner so none of the plates were yours, but fuck me (no, not all of you at once) you sure as hell made yourselves a cup of tea when you arrived. I am sure that other excuses will be that you were not there on Monday, how could you help clean when you left on Sunday. Apologies for being critical but seven people did not generate eight bags of rubbish in the last 24 hours that they were there. There was plenty of washing to be done on Saturday morning but most people felt it was their God given right to ski all day, after all you wouldn't have risked death walking up if you had known that you'd have to do house keeping. If you knew that your lifts were leaving and you didn't have time to help with any of the housekeeping, you should have thought of that earlier and organized your ski time better. Believe it or not, Hoare Hut is not a full service Swiss chalet. The couple of extra hours of skiing that the last seven got in on Monday morning did not justify the time spent cleaning up everybody's mess.

Thanks to all those people who did help and did do their share of the housework, this bitch is aimed at those who take for granted that the hut is clean and there simply for them, but as for the rest of you lazy #@&*s you can F*$& OFF, I hope we never see you there again.

Yours Sincerely,

Your Ski Chalet Attendants

Roof Of The Peninsula

Sunday 19 September 1999

Carel Haumann

After a wild thought, a look at a map and discussions with various people the route was set: UCT to Kalk Bay, taking in Table Mountain, Constantia Nek, Constantia Berg, and the Kalk Bay Mountains along the way. Ambitious, crazy, foolhardy, stupid, awesome, once in a lifetime, you'll have to come and see for yourself! I can only tell you that as a local Peninsula walk this is as hard as they come.

Our group of 7 mad men and one mad woman met at 7am at the Sport Centre. After very little delay we set off. On the notice I had stated in all seriousness that I would wait for no man (it so happened that I waited for a woman, albeit briefly). So you can imagine the jeers when I rocked up at 7:03 am, a full 3 mintes late!

Very quickly Newlands Ravine lay below us. Ledges provided a little bit of excitement and after Carrel's Ledge it was decided that fun & games should be postponed temporarily. It is when one glances across the spine of the Peninsula from the top of Table Mountain that the shocking truth of the 35? km of hiking

which lay ahead becomes apparent. Two members of the group took off at the speed of UCT Athletic Club members and journeyed back towards UCT via Skeleton Gorge.

So we settled into cruising mode and soon arrived at Constantia Nek. At that point our precious female member deserted us. Nienke had stashed a bicycle at the Nek and under the cover of the study of Anaesthetics decided to abandon us. Well, she has something to come back for. From that point onwards, in the face of stupidity, pain and a Chariots of Fire-type attitude to physical suffering the rest of us (Gavin, James, Mike, Wolraad, Carel) - continued onwards as if driven by a machine.

We passed many surprised travellers along the way. Great was our relief when the tar uphill road up Constantia Berg abated and gave way to the tempting Saturday afternoon braais of Silvermine Nature Reserve. On that horrendous tar road we had even outlasted hardy mountain bikers. Soon we were to cross the psychological crux of the route - Ou Kaapse Weg. As one crosses this highway the temptation to stick a thumb in the air and descend into civil tranquillity down below is great. The smells which emanate from braais do not do much to ease the pain of the masochist hiker.

I suggested that in future one should arrange for a group of non-hikers to meet the "peninsuleers" at Silvermine for a braai. Further thought revealed that this would make completing the hike almost impossible as the temptation to join to the non-hikers in their cars for the return journey would be irresistible, especially if one had just had a nice meal.

At this time it so happened that the group developed a pathological interest in varicose veins. It became common practice to inspect a certain individual's legs. This was driven to a climax when a young boy of a different party lost his footing and fell over whilst inspecting this varicose phenomenon. No doubt subscribers to the theory of Latent Sexuality within the Club will have something to say about this. As an aside for the uninitiated, this theory relates sleeping habits of club members to geometrical limitations of the Drakensberg range in Natal and features important postulates such as the "Cone" concept and the "3:2 Kestrel" observation. Interested members are advised to pursue the matter further after discussion with the Committee.

Well, we had no such luck and continued on towards Kalk Bay at a blistering pace. We were now being driven by an objective of which we had always been subconsciously aware but which had suddenly become tangible - the Brass Bell.

And then, without much further ceremony, we were there. It was over. Kalk Bay and all her riches were ours. We marched into the Brass Bell and sat down to a delicious plate of hot chips each. It goes without saying that beer and other drinks flowed freely. All that remained was the return journey.

The Roof of the Peninsula has been walked upon !

Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail – Ralph Waldo Emerson

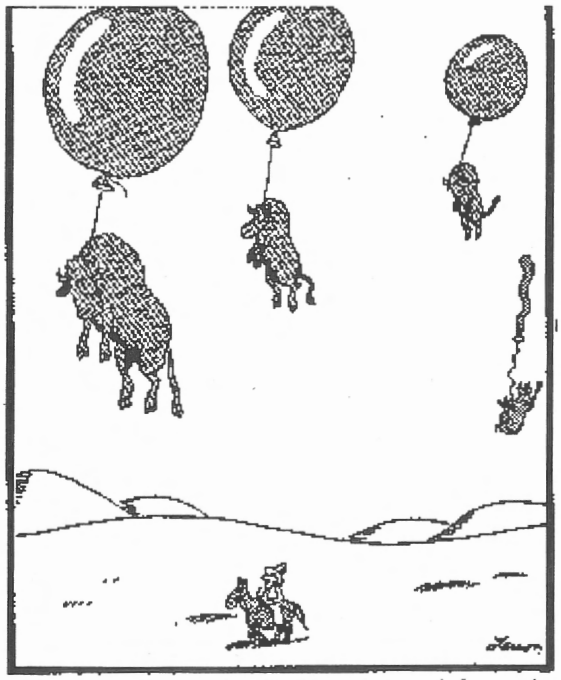
High Temperature Chromonominal Associations

James Latimer Taylor, *et al.*
(Zuurberg Advanced Institute of Higher Learning ZAIHL)

P.S. (Prior Scriptum):
This report should be read in Times New Roman Size 12, if this is not available please contact the publishers.

The Problem:

For many members of the Mountain and Ski community a visit to the so called simplicity of nature can be intellectually exhausting. Not only does one have to remember that the heavy stationary things are rocks, the slightly more flexible greener things are plants, the even more flexible, flying things are birds and those really huge things are usually mountains, but one also encounters these bipedal creatures with swollen canvas covered backs. These bipeds, whom I shall for convenience refer to as Type IV(a) hominids, all look the same but claim to each have their own name, and every time one goes on a new hike there are more Type IV(a) hominids who, every time, demand to be fitted into a new totally ordered name-set.



More Facts of Nature: As part of nature's way to help spread the species throughout their ecological niche, bison often utilize a behavior naturalists have described as "ballooning."

The problem one is faced with is simple to state: "Does an appropriate name-set always exist, how is to be constructed and most importantly how is the correlation between this abstract class and the present group of Type IV(a)'s actually established?"

Early Findings:

Once again, *The Royal Journal of Aberwaxities* contains a definitive early paper on the subject. Wally Polovski's paper (1983 vol. 2) entitled *Cryonominal Association* essentially pointed out that in extreme low temperature conditions, such as those found near either of the earth's poles, the name-set can be empirically established in a way that would be consistent for all time. This is to be done by arranging everything that is not white and icy into a straight line, placing oneself at the one end of the line, asking and writing the name of the first object in the line and then proceeding down the queue, repeating this process until the other end has been reached. The members of the line should then be asked to remove their clothing, and remain stationary for an unspecified but 'reasonable' length of time.

Prof. Polovski, after using some revolutionary new methods in the formulation and analysis of this technique, went on to perform extensive, controlled tests. The results were very promising.

Once the name-set had been established, its relevance was appropriate in perpetuity. The Type IV(a) hominids and the names in the set, were linearly ordered and the associations were trivial, furthermore, once a IV(a) had been included in one list it was never necessary to include them in another.

There were some drawbacks to this method.

New Developments:
For over fourteen (14) years this field of research remained essentially dormant, after Thomas Wimbourne's famous No Extension Theorem, which severely limited the possibility of generic name sets at higher temperatures. This theorem did however have somewhat restrictive assumptions of a nature too technical for this journal's readership.

Suffice it to say that while working in the field of VTD and after extensive correspondence with collaborators all over the world (even some from beyond Cape Town), I have found a loophole in the No Extension Theorem and have generalised Cryonominal Association to what has become commonly referred to as High Temperature Chromonominal Association.

Actual findings:
I hope to publish my full findings in a respected journal but will review the essential features here.

Firstly, it should be noted that Type IV(a) hominids almost always wear clothing of some type, and this clothing, without fail, has colour.

Quite simply the colour of the clothing is the same as the name of the character donning this clothing, if not in actual lettering (partial or whole), then at least in some deeper nature.

Now one should not be mistaken, it is not that a Robert would wear a Robert coloured shirt, since Robert is not really a colour, but he would inevitable wear a red shirt, or robustly coloured shorts (perhaps rosy) or even rancid[1] socks.

I could continue to give extensive examples of this Chromonominal association in action but I believe that once it has been pointed out it is easy to integrate[2] into one's understanding of the universe.

Conclusions and sources of error:
The only conceivable stumbling block could be people changing their clothes otherwise, life has been made easy, all the world's problems have been solved and unending, universal peace is in the pipeline.

1 In a suitable general sensory system where rancid is in fact a type of hyper-colour.
2 In the case of difficulty, sign up for my course to be offered in 2000 or 2001.

We Are The Champions!

SASSU Climbing Competition

University of Natal, Durban
25 & 26 September 1999

Jocelyn Newmarch

That was the weekend that was. It started with a horrible drive to Durban and ended with a horrible drive to Cape Town. In between, however, it improved tremendously with the inclusion of beach, holiday, friends, food, and, of course, national victory. I think I'll start with Friday...

I reluctantly woke at 5am in Bethlehem, 24 hours after leaving CT, to find Leanne and Mattieu reloading the car, and soon we were cruising down the Durban freeways towards

Robyn's house in Illovo Beach. We got there dirty, smelly, and hungry, only to find everyone else had buggered off to the beach for a pre-breakfast swim! That day was officially designated a "Rest Day" and people went off visiting friends and family, or renewing their acquaintances with soap and hot water. In the evening we had a braai and sat around drinking peacefully – until we were introduced to "House Rules", a card game which revealed the aggressive tendencies of some of the players.



On Saturday everyone was shoved out of bed by an enthusiastic Rom Cullis who herded us off to the beach to wake up in the waves. Then, with a quick stop for breakfast and climbing clothes, we went off to check out the competition. At UND's Old Mutual Sports Centre, we noticed certain features:

1) they have a way cool outside climbing wall
2) our bouldering wall is better than theirs, but...
3) they have a kickass main indoor wall, with overhangs and roofs.

The unanimous reaction to (3) was naked envy and a return to the "we want one of those" mentality of childhood. Aaaahhhhhh!

The competition had three categories: bouldering, speed and difficulty climbing, of which the first two were fun events. Everyone went off to do the boulder problems in the morning, until we were called in to check out the routes for the technical climbing. All competitors, men and women, had three routes, with two in common. A long, tense afternoon followed, and at the end of it, Carly was through to the women's finals, and five of the eight men's finalists were from UCT – Mattieu, Gordon, Craig, Jamie, and Keith. The afternoon was rounded off by some speed climbing, which was won by Craig.

After this everyone indulged in UND's gorgeous showers (no, not all at once) before finding food at Debonairs, down the road from the university. We sat on the terrace and certain incorrigibles checked out the climbability of the walls round about (thankfully they did not put theory into practice) and here the group split into those going back to the house and those keen to check out the Durban nightlife. There was also a third group who wanted to combine the two – fence-sitters!

After a hard night's partying we staggered back to the car only to realise we didn't know the way home! Anyway we got back to Illovo Beach without too much hardship. Strangely enough, people were much more reluctant to get out of bed on Sunday morning...

Off we went to UND once again, (getting lost on the way, naturally) to watch the finals – and some of us to compete. Carly was placed second in the women's finals, who had an interesting route – I don't think any of the competitors managed to finish it.

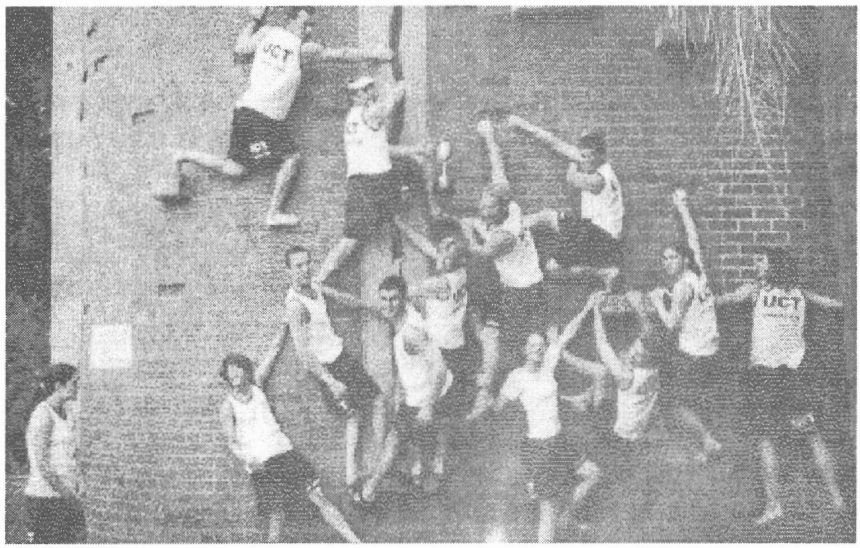
Then everyone was herded out of the hall while the men's route was put up. When we were finally allowed to check it out, there was a horrified silence, eventually broken by Gordon asking, "So, Craig, what's your plan for doing the route?"

One by one the finalists attempted a wall almost devoid of grips. One by one they were ignominiously defeated... until the UCT Spiderman showed up. The very last competitor moved confidently and smoothly up the wall, conquered the crux move with consummate ease and displayed the same brilliant technique on the roof, previously untouched by human hand since the route

was put up that morning. As the music swelled to a crescendo, Keith Forbes moved onto the last grip of the wall. To deafening cheers he pulled up loads of slack and clipped the last bolts, whilst hanging one-handed from the roof!

After that performance it hardly needs to be said that UCT won the men's finals. However we were also declared overall winners of the competition, having accumulated more points than any other institution represented.

To celebrate, we decided to check out Natal's premier sport climbing crag, the Wave Cave. Unfortunately the weather was rather miz, and no one felt like hiking for an hour in the rain, crossing a flooded river in the process, just to have a squiz at some rather hard routes. So (typical climbers) we took the easy way out and had lunch at a Kloof bakery instead. The first car load headed back to Cape Town that afternoon, and the rest of us decided to try the finalists' routes at UND, declaring them to be very do-able (if only some of us had displayed that form the day before).



For supper that night, Craig, the Durbanite among us, proposed an excellent little place called Johnny's, for cheap Indian food. Little did we suspect how cheap...

Later that night, ten of us stood in the pouring rain outside a kiosk somewhere in the city and ordered supper. We decided that caution would be the better part of valor (especially since prawns cost only R2 more than chicken) and most of us went vegetarian for a change. Supper for all of us came to R60! Next stop, beach - where, predictably enough, it was also raining and so we sat inside a marquee and enjoyed the atmosphere. As Craig had promised, the food was excellent and came in large quantities (perhaps a little too large). Sleep, that bisexual prostitute, was intent on seducing us all and we were in no state to resist his sweet temptations... especially since we all had pre-dawn departures lined up for us.

At this point I would like to thank everyone who helped make this all possible: our sponsors from UCT Sports Council, the MSC, SASSU for organising the competition, Robyn for her beautiful house (please can I come back?) and for organising the team, and finally, of course, everyone who climbed as part of the UCT team.

<u>The Champions (*ahem!*) Are:</u>

James Smith, Keith Forbes, Gordon Forbes, Mattieu de Villiers, Craig Reed, Dinko Basich, Tim Forrows, Solomon Dowdall, Carly Brown, Jocelyn Newmarch, Leanne Prodehl, Scott McLeod
Team Manager and Official Photographer – Robyn Cullis

Go as far as you can see, and when you get there you will see further. – Orison Marsden

A Walk on the Wild Side

Cape Point Trail

2 – 3 October

Alex Brooke

Bright and early on a certain Saturday morning, the Matthews Clan, Jocelyn, Tracy (for a day) and Alex set out to discover the Cape Point Nature Reserve. The route for the day was nearly 20km (with a longer alternative we politely declined), but was mostly flat and therefore, in my terms, most enjoyable. We (well, I did) felt like intrepid explorers, closely observing spoor and scanning the horizon that teemed with wildlife. Teemed could possibly be an overstatement, but we definitely saw many bok, of all shapes and sizes: big jobs, grey jobs, brown jobs. We were also wowed by the convincing efforts of quite a few tortoises to 'play dead', enjoyed watching a black eagle, played with two puffadders and saw an ostrich running along the coast, strangely not hemmed in by a fence. (The ostrich, not the coast.)

The one animal I successfully identified (at rather close quarters ... like two quarters of an inch) was the baboon. We wisely ate lunch near a troop of about 30. Happily picnicking on our rock near the sea, we were rudely interrupted by Mnr. Bobbejaan (affectionately 'Bob') who came, as Alan pointed out, to do a spot of 'shopping', picking out the tastiest morsels on offer. Off he scampered to eat them at a distance, but he'd clearly enjoyed our company so much that he deigned us worthy of another visit. Or two. We were immensely gratified. Carol obliged with a tug of war, when he ran out of shopping to do. Eventually, we got tired of our uncouth visitor who'd never learnt to say 'please' and 'thank you', and Mrs Matthews showed him the door.



"I can't believe it! This is impossible! Nothing here but — wait! Wait! I see something!... Yes! There they are — granola bars!"

That night was spent in general merriment in a little 'hut' (including kitchen, with sink and gas stove, and toilet -which remained behind a locked door) with the most exquisite view in the peninsula. We sampled the delights of Alan's stirfry and Alex's Transkei Slush (don't try and make it with condensed milk) and felt fat. Jocelyn 'Magic' Newmarch stunned all with her card tricks and then an enthusiastic game of Arsehole pointed women to their rightful position in society: neither Carol nor Alex held a rank lower than vice president throughout the evening. (We won't mention that there was only one male present.)

The second day saw a plethora of whales, and one, at last, obliged Alex with a "Free Willy" move. It also saw very little else at times, because it was wrapped in a mist and drizzle. But this soon lifted, and we got some very beautiful, unique views from various hills. We passed our baboon friends and very nearly returned the compliment by rushing up and ripping their bush away from them and eating it at a distance, but

several factors made us decide against it. All in all, it was a very satisfying, beautiful and entertaining hike and well worth doing.

Mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery. – John Ruskin

Tyrolean Traverse across Platteklip Gorge

Steve Bretherick

Group: Steve Bretherick, Gavin Greenwood, Greg Hutton-Squire, Ianni Vamvadelis

On a Sunday morning at about 3:30 Greg knocked on my window to let him in, he had been at a 21st and couldn't be bothered to drive home to his house, just to have me wake him up in 3 hours time. At 6am I woke him up anyway with a cup of tea, no sugar, just a dash of milk. Gavin phoned next to check if we were still going, "Yes! We're still bloody going - But the weather doesn't look good - crap man this is only temporary cloud it will be gone by 9 o'clock." Greg and I ate breakfast while we waited for Ianni and Gavin to arrive. Gavin arrived first and promptly laced his shoes, Ianni arrived a little later on a skateboard. We all climbed into the bakkie and went back to Ianni's house to fetch the fishing line he forgot and then to Greg's house to get his walking shoes and clothes – he was still dressed as if he were going to All Bar None.

Eventually we arrived at Table Mountain and began the walk up Platteklip Gorge. While we walked we listened to Greg complain about how he was still drunk, Ianni going on about how his sister had buggered up his car, and me spluttering like I was an entire hospital ward with whooping cough. Gavin remained rather quiet; we had only told him 10 minutes earlier what we were about to try.

The idea was to swing though Platteklip Gorge by making a Tyrolean traverse across the gorge and jumping in to the gorge on another rope clipped to the Tyrolean.

We set up the Tyrolean by throwing fishing line (which is another chapter entitled 'a 300 meter knot') tied to a rock across the gorge to pull the ropes back. This took some time and not just because of the zero visibility due to low cloud but also to our lack of casting practice. We decided to test the whole system first by just doing a traverse of the rope with no swing but even this requires a bit of guts. Since it was my hair-brained scheme I went first.

The guts to jump off the edge and free fall 1.5 meters before the rope becomes taut and slides you to the middle were more than I thought. I had to stop and wait a while to gather up some courage before jumping. Everything went really well which was a great change for me since in the previous week everything that could go wrong did. Hanging in the middle was amazing, it was nearly 60m to the ground and 15m either way to the gorge edges. Now the hard bit came: to pull myself up to the other side. I was belayed from that side, which was not really a belay because if the Tyrolean had gone wrong the swing into the gorge wall by the belay rope would have been just as bad as hitting the ground, but anyway the belay helped to pull me out.

After I had guinea-pigged the system, it was Ianni's turn to crap his pants. I had to take my turn talking to the FTs who came up with dumbass questions like "You trust those little wedges in there like that?" and "Are you not worried the ropes will break?" – no shit, if we weren't a little worried then none of us would be shitting ourselves before jumping onto it.



"Egad! It's Professor DeArmond—the epitome of evil amongst butterfly collectors!"

Gavin was next and he successfully tested the ropes to a strain of 85kgs. Greg followed him about an hour later which really began to annoy the FTs who stood around waiting to see a local kill himself.

After we each had a go we packed it up. We decided that the big jump was not such a good idea since the visibility was so crap, at times we could not see across the gorge to the other side and Ianni and Greg had other engagements. It was probably a good thing since I doubt I have the courage to do a 10 meter free fall with an extra swing of 20 meters.

I do think that the whole swing idea is possible. A Tyrolean traverse as a pivot point and another rope from that to swing on would be set up. A swing of up to 30 meters (including the drop of the Tyrolean) could be possible.

Maybe something for 2000!

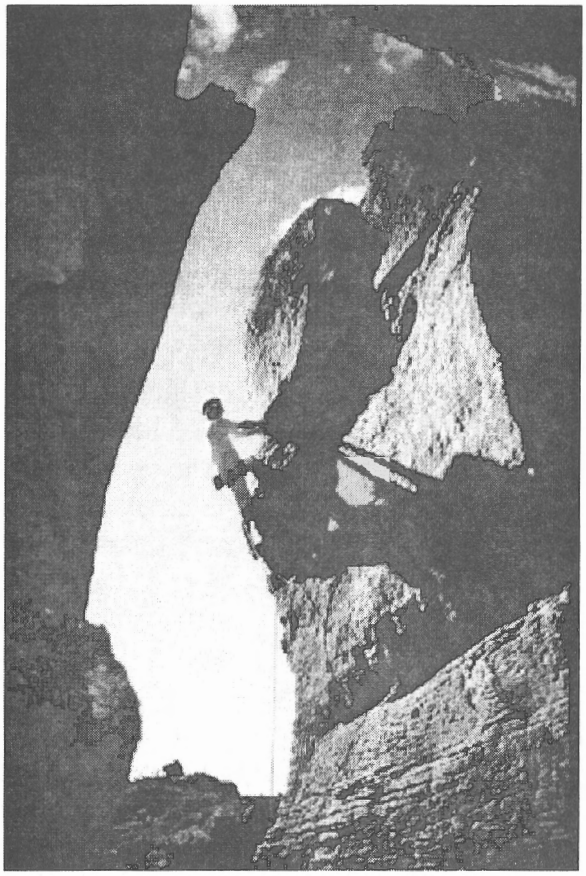
Muizenberg Trad Climbing & General Comments About Climbing & The UCT MSC

Saturday 2 OCTOBER 1999

Carel Haumann

Organising a successful trad meet had always been the ultimate goal in my career as climbs convenor. This stems from my conviction that sport climbing is at best an adjunct to traditional climbing. Realisation of this goal had always been hampered by two factors, number one that we never had enough leaders. This resulted in the typical President's Rock Meet scenario where the leader:seconder ratio would be something like 1:6. In my opinion this is unacceptable as it results in very little enjoyment for both seconder and leader. A vicious circle is set in motion where leaders are hard to come by when one is organising the rock meet and more rock meets are thus flawed. Secondly there is a problem in traditional climbing in that a situation might arise where if someone fell off and that person did not know what to do it would be sub-optimal to say the least. This is not synonymous with climbing ability but rather with rope handling skills and knowledge of personal technical limitations. Anyone who has climbed with me will know that I cannot climb a hard grade. This does not prevent me from climbing wonderful traditional routes and gaining

tremendous amounts of pleasure from it. Similarly people should not be intimidated by traditional climbing as being "hard". They should rather aim to develop the rope handling skills necessary to cope with dire situations should they arise.



This problem experienced by our club has not been an isolated one. In the early 1990's the MCSA had exactly the same problem. There were too many seconders and too few leaders. This was not a matter of leaders not being out there, simply that they did not attend meets. The MCSA sat down and revolutionised their rock meet policies in accordance with the following principles:

1) Rock meets are there for climbers to get together, climb together and gain from these experiences.

2) They are not primarily intended for people to learn how to climb.

3) Separate training meets should be held where people can learn how to climb en masse.

Experienced climbers now attend their meets because they know that they will enjoy a good day's climbing.

In accordance with these principles we held a traditional rock meet at Muizeneberg. It went very well and we managed to climb at least 2 routes per party on the day. Grades ranged from 12 - 21 which is evidence that traditional climbing does not translate into hard or easy climbing but rather into adventure climbing.

All you leaders out there please attend our meets! We will make sure that your services are not abused!

We divide time into years. We divide years into seasons. We have different names for every river, a different name for every ocean on the earth. But the river does not know that we have named it "river" – it does not know that it is separate from the waters that call "Come." Come. The river has flowed a thousand years. It is spring, and the river is spilling with the newness of winter's melted snow, each season flowing into each season. River, I have been gone a long time. I am returning to your waters. River, I've come back. River, I'm afraid. Carry me like water.

Benjamin Alire Sáenz, Carry Me Like Water

"So where the F*** is this crag?"

Climbing at Noordhoek Crag

9 October 1999

Steve Bretherick

Leader: Carel Haumann

Two carloads of people arrived at the sports centre, all of them were eager to go climbing at a new crag none of us had ever heard of before. After waiting around for some of the extra names on the list to arrive we left at 8:30. Carel was in the front car leading the way. The second car simply followed blind.

The route we took was very familiar - in fact it was the exact route that we follow when going climbing at Silvermine. We parked exactly we usually park in Silvermine in order to go climbing at Silvermine. Most of us were really confused now because Noordhoek is on the other side of the world from here. Jayson was already there, he walked up and did the obligatory "hello how are you?" junk while Carel put on army pants and great big bundu bashing boots. Jayson then did some explaining to us about the walk-in.

Once Carel had laced up his shoes, strapped the bottom of his pants up so nothing could fall down his shoes, tightened his sheath, clipped handgrenades to his belt and loaded his Uzzi, Jayson lead the way and Carel walked at the back making sure that by the time eight people had walked down the non-existent path, we had already trampled any thing that might have scratched him.

After about an hour of cursing Carel and Jayson for taking us to such an obscure location we arrived at the crag. Since half the morning was wasted by the walking everyone got down to business quite quickly. In no time there were four ropes hanging off the cliffs. Everyone attempted just about everything and. the climbing was well worth the walk.

The climbing is mainly trad, there are a couple of old rusty bolts that run up climbs of grade 25, but for trad it is a very nice crag. Most of the climbs are long single pitches varying from 16 to insane. The walk-in is still better than walking up Table Mountain.

Waaihoek Race

Ruth Woudstra

They'll be running up the mountain when they come,
Four boys and a girl joined by some
normal people who to Hoare Hut came
for a party whose name
will go down in the halls of fame.

Ianni Vandam the race did win
with Gregorius second, sans bottle of gin.
Steve "Brass Balls" Bretherick was the third man there
And "Hotlips" Wolraad fourth, with his usual stylish flare.

Ruth "I don't get it" Woudstra was fifth
Followed by late entry Jelte demonstrating his pith
The Normal People followed one by one
Claiming they had the same amount of fun.

Some left early, some left late
But those who stayed had a rocking time, mate!
The singalong was a bit false yet great
And in the tickling session some of us met our fate.

This is a Tic is the game we did play
Yet to claim its success would be impossible to say
A kilo spaghetti us hikers did share -
Thank you Derek, as cook you well did fare.

A massage parlour Hoare Hut became
With the Madam Ruth going temporarily insane.
Godfather Adri went early to bed
The foot massage unappreciated yet a man well-fed.

The next morning after the dishes were done
The wind died down and out came the sun
We walked down a mount from a point that was Hi
And swore to be back before the day we would die.

En route home at Amberg we stopped
And viewed a dog who looked extremely hot.
Some icy things we there did consume
Served by a Swiss maid - really well-groomed.

But all in all the race was superb
No sign of a reject, no sign of a nerd
Because the Hut of Hoare is a synonym for fun
So don't be left out, next time come along!

The man of Faith may face death as Columbus faced his first voyage from the shores of Spain. What lies beyond the seas he cannot tell: all his special expectations may be mistaken, but his insight into the clear meaning of present facts may persuade him beyond doubt that the sea has another shore.
HE Fosdick, 1878 - 1969

The 2nd Annual Waaihoek Challenge

3 – 4 October 1999

Adriano Iorio

Co-ordinator: Adriano Iorio
There is a theory that governs the coming together of people. It states that in any group there is at least one crazed lunatic. There is an extension of this theory, specifically orientated towards the Mountain and Ski Club, that proposes that seldom is there *only one* crazed lunatic.

Just as Murphy's laws dictate life, so does this Maniacal Law predict the outcome of the Waaihoek Challenge. Of the fifteen competitors, six proved to be crazed lunatics completing the challenge in a sub-two-hour-time.

The event comprises of a race up to the club's legendary Hoare Hut with competitors having to carry 15% of body mass. This year the Challenge was combined together with a pre-exam stress reliever weekend. Even so the turn out was fairly disappointing especially after the precedent set by the previous year's challenge. Better see you there next year guys ***and*** gals...!

In true Superman fashion Ianni Vamva-'D' led the way forward to victory in an astounding 1:21:03 which was 6:03 short of his record time. (Don't worry - I also can't believe it!) Greg "doo-be-doo" Hutton-Squire was a close second only two minutes

behind Ianni, with a chasing Brass Balled Bretherick only two minutes behind him. The mountain goat Euvrard came home in a time of 1:31 ahead of our first lady home Ruth "I Take no Prisoners" Woudstra in 1:58. Go Girl! The two winners each receieved a T-Shirt as true commendation of the sweat burnt on the way up.

Once all the fun and excitement had turned itself into spasms of cramps and stiffness we all lounged about on top of the mountain (never straying too far from the hut) and enjoyed the early evening air. The aches and pains were quickly remedied with an outrageous massage session - any physio would have been proud!

The list of participants reads (and it is now up to you to make sure that you get involved in the next Waaihoek Challenge!) as: Ianni, Greg, Steve, Wolraad, Ruth, Adriano, Derek, James, Terence, Kerry, Daniel, Renate, Charlotte, Gavin and Jelte.

Some men can see life clean and flickering all around,
And some can see only what they are shown;
Some men look straight into the eyes of gods,
And some can see no gods,
They only know the gods are there because of the gleam
On the face of the men who see.
- DH Lawrence

A New Dimension in Bridge Swinging

Steve Bretherick shows us the way

The General Idea

The plan is to find a bridge about 20m high and tie a rope to it with a loop at the bottom. Then drive along the road under the bridge at some speed with someone on the back of a bakkie ready to catch the rope, clip it to their harness and swing up off the car. Now I know this sounds a bit loony so I decided to try and put some of that bull shit 1st year physics to use. I think the average width for a road with both directions of traffic is about 4.5m wide, but let's add some more because there's likely to be an emergency lane on both sides (4.5m) and some space for granny to push her cart on the side of the road (2m). So let's say the average bridge is 11m wide. We should find a bridge that is at least 20m high or we might as well go play on the park swings.

So in order to swing up to the height of the bridge we will need mgh joules of energy. I think 70kg is a nice weight. Therefore we will need

$$mgh = (70)(9.8)(20)=13720 \text{ J}.$$

From $E=1/2mv^2$ we can get the required speed to clip onto the rope

$$v=19.78 \text{ m.s}^{-1} = 71 \text{ km per hour}$$

which is quite a comfortable speed but what's the point of swinging only to 20m when you could swing all the way up to 40m. That would mean that we need twice the energy and therefore will need 1.4x the original speed. But hell let's go twice as fast. That makes it 140km per hour (ah, now we're getting somewhere). Our guinea pig will have to stand on the back of a bakkie and catch a stationary object and clip it to their waist at 140 km per h.

But this will only get us up to 40 metres. At this point we will have run out of horizontal and vertical speed and gravity will help us to remove our teeth on the side of the bridge as we fall straight back down. I like my teeth in my face, so now we will have to clear the entire bridge by swinging over it. To do this we need to go FASTER.

Since we will be free falling, we will have 2 seconds before we collect a fat lip from the side of the bridge.
I know this because h=1/2gt where h is 20 and g is gravity (9.8). So we have 2 seconds to move over the 11m wide bridge. Which adds an extra $2ms^{-1}$ to the speed of the bakkie. But there's no point in kissing the other side of the bridge instead so let's clear the bridge by 10m. That means that we will need to have a horizontal speed of $10m.s^{-1}$ at the height of the bridge. Which brings me to the next problem. My bakkie doesn't go 180 km per hour. So I have decided that we will build a platform to go onto Ianni's roof rack. But now since we have such a nice car and all and 180 is just a crappy number and air friction and all that jazz was not taken in to consideration lets round it up to 200km per hour. (Ianni will not be driving). Then once you have swung all the way round you can get off the swing on to the pick up truck. (yes this requires unclipping the harness and landing on the back of a car at pretty much the same speed as you got off it). If you fail to get off you will swing up and hit the bottom of the bridge.

If any one is interested in such an outing, and feels that the above maths is all right then please organise the following:

- The bridge with no traffic on the lower road or upper road.
- Ianni's car
- Anther pickup truck
- Guinea pig
- Photographer
- Paramedic
- Priest
- Two drivers
- MSC Climbing ropes.
- Toilet paper.

I think we should grade it easy seeing that there is no walking required.

To My Mountain

Kathleen Raine (b. 1908)

Since I must love your north
of darkness, cold, and pain,
the snow, the lovely glen,
let me love true worth,

the strength of the hard rock,
the deafening stream of wind
that carries sense away
swifter than flowing blood.

Heather is harsh to tears
and the rough moors
give the buried face no peace
but make me rise,

and oh, the sweet scent, and purple skies!

Mountain and Ski Club Quiz

A selection of questions from David and Paul's visual-aid assisted Mountain and Ski Club quiz.

Everest

1. Who was the first person to summit Everest?
2. Who was the first person to solo Everest?
3. Name one of the two professional guides who died on Everest in the storm of 10 May 1996.
4. What significant event occurred in 1999 regarding the controversial summit attempt of 1928?

The MSC and its meets

5. When was the MSC formed?
6. Who was the last MSC member to win Sportsperson of the Year?
7. Who won the 1999 Devil's Peak Ice Cream Challenge?
8. What annual MSC meet regularly gets more attendance than any other?
9. In what club activity would you find the German Section?
10. Who won this year's MSC climbing competition?

Cape mountains

11. Where in the Cedarberg would find chickens in Bree Street?
12. What is the height of Lion's Head?
13. Where can you walk from Adderley Street to the Woolworths Building without worrying about being hit by a car?
14. How many different types of friend does a climber have on Table Mountain?
15. What is the highest peak in the Western Cape, and what is its height?
16. Where can you have an Energy Crisis running away from a Little Red Rooster?

General questions

17. What is the highest peak in Southern Africa?
18. Where is The Restaurant, and what does it offer?
19. Where are the Quahlamba?
20. What does Quahlamba mean?

The Zuurberg Property

21. Name four peaks on the Zuurberg boundary.
22. Who paraglided at Waaihoek?
23. What is the original name of Hoare Hut?
24. What is Rob Meyer's real first name?
25. Why are there tears at the top of Hagga's Hill?
26. What is the lowest point on the ridge between Waaihoek peak and Zeebasberg?
27. What is etched on the plaque in front of the pew?
28. What is the highest peak you can see from the pew?
29. How easy is it to get "Piste" at Waaihoek?

Big Mountains

30. What is the geological phenomenon causing the Himalayas?
31. Name both 8000m peaks wholly contained in countries (i.e. not forming borders).
32. What is the second highest peak in South America?
33. Name the highest peak on each continent.
34. What is the indigenous name for Mount McKinely?
35. What is a Monro?
36. Why are they so called?
37. Who led the first attempt on K2?
38. Give another name for Chogolisa.
39. Which Second World War regiment originates from the base of Manaslu (8157)?

The Witels

40. What is the longest waterfall in the Witels?
41. Who first completed the full length of the Witels without exiting the kloof, and when?
42. How many deaths have there been in the Witels since 1990?
43. What is the most common intruder into the Witels?
44. What feature inhibits ascent of the Witels upstream of the current entry point?
45. How many Witels trees in the Witels (approximately)?

Climbing

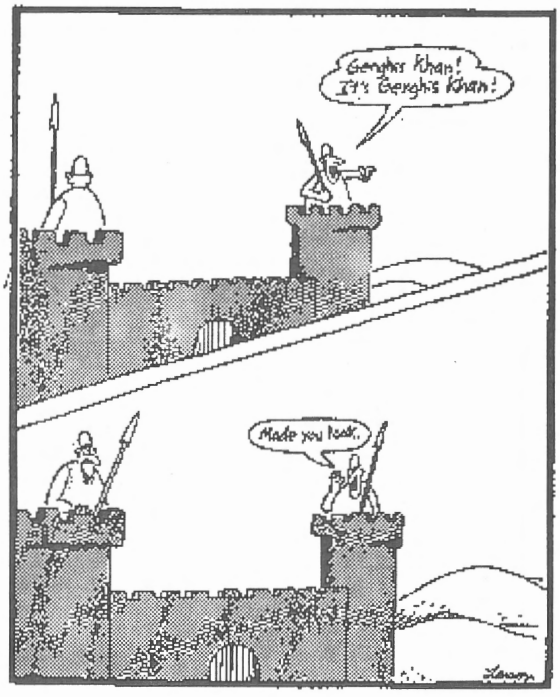
46. What grade is F3 in the SA Sportsclimbing grading system?
47. Where is the best place in Cape Town to Talk to the Trees?
48. Which MSC member opened the Blaze of Glory wall?
49. Which Cape country route on white mountains is orchestral?
50. Which Cape Town crag was bolted entirely on 27 April 1994?
51. Who first ascended the Column in the Drakensberg?
52. What was special about this ascent?
53. Name the multi-pitch route Mark Johnston opened in Montague.

Club Members

54. Which UCT climber is sometimes referred to as Drunken Idiot?
55. Which of Newton's laws of physics did David Gwynn-Evans experience?
56. Which of Newton's laws does this prove?
57. Which club member has been overheard saying of his girlfriend "She may be 15, but MAN you should see the size of her tits!"?
58. Who was chairperson of the MSC in 1999?
59. Who is going to be giving lots of people lots of long slow comfortable screws at this year's cocktail party?

ANSWERS

1. George Mallory / Sherpa Tenzing Norgay
2. Reinhold Messner
3. Rob Hall and Scott Fischer
4. The bodies of Mallory and Irving were first found
5. 1933
6. Andrew de Klerk
7. Ben Knights
8. The Fresher's Country Meet
9. Path building at Adderly Street
10. Justin Hawkins
11. Krakadouw
12. 669 metres above mean sea level
13. Hex River Mountains
14. Three: the plant, the gear and the partner
15. Matroosberg, 2264
16. The Wolfberg Cracks
17. Thaba Ntlenyana
18. Watervalboven; climbing
19. Natal (Drakensberg)
20. Upward-pointed Barrier of Spears
21. Buffelshoek, Mitchell's, Skurweberg, Waaihoek, Mt. Superior, Zeebasberg
22. Bruce Mortimer
23. Long Gully Hut
24. Volkert
25. Hagga is crying tears of joy
26. Point Hi



27. Don't Hoot! I'm moving as fast as I can! -Emma Sealy
28. Matroosberg
29. Impossible
30. Upliftment resulting from tectonic plate movement
31. Nanga Parbat, Shisha Pangma
32. Chimborazo
33. North America: Mt McKinley; South America: Aconcagua; Africa: Kilimanjaro; Antarctica: Mt Vinson; Asia: Mt Everest; Australiasia: Mt Kosciusco/Mt Cook; Europe: Mont Blanc
34. Denali
35. A peak in Scotland above 3000 ft in altitude
36. Lord Monro compiled the first list
37. The Duke of Abruzzi
38. K2
39. The Ghurkas
40. Disa Falls
41. Mike Mamacos, 1950
42. Two: Nicholas Penny, David Tomalin
43. *Pinus pinaster*
44. Barrier Falls
45. None (although there are Water Witels plants)
46. 18
47. Peer's Cave
48. Jayson Orton
49. Exposure in F Major
50. The Polling Booth / the Higgovale Quarry
51. George Thompson
52. It was a solo ascent during which George fell on the descent, and was saved by grabbing hold of a shrub
53. The Rave
54. Duncan Elliott
55. Gravity
56. An object will move in a straight line at constant speed until operated on by a force
57. David Glass
58. Ianni Vamvadelis
59. Gavin Greenwood

TROPICAL ICE: A SHATTERED DREAM

The UCT Mount Kenya Expedition 1999

Jelte Harnmeijer

Group: Carel Haumann, Jayson Orton, Jelte Harnmeijer

"It would be like suicide," said the man on the bunk bed. The medic, the archaeologist and the geologist each gave their own, distinct, nervous laughs. Suicide. Hah-hah. The three avoided each others' eyes.



The medic cleared his throat while the other two shuffled their feet in the little wooden room, 4800 metres above sea-level. The room smelt of kerosene vapour and years of accumulated sweat.

"Er..." began the medic. Outside, a trickle of melted water started making its way down the frosted window.

"How long do you think it will take for the snow to disappear?" The medic asked this

with the sort of academic, objective tone of voice one comes to expect from medics. But no one missed the tension that followed.

"Two days ago… it snowed" said the man on the bed. The three studied their boots, which still showed abundant evidence of walking through mud and snow.

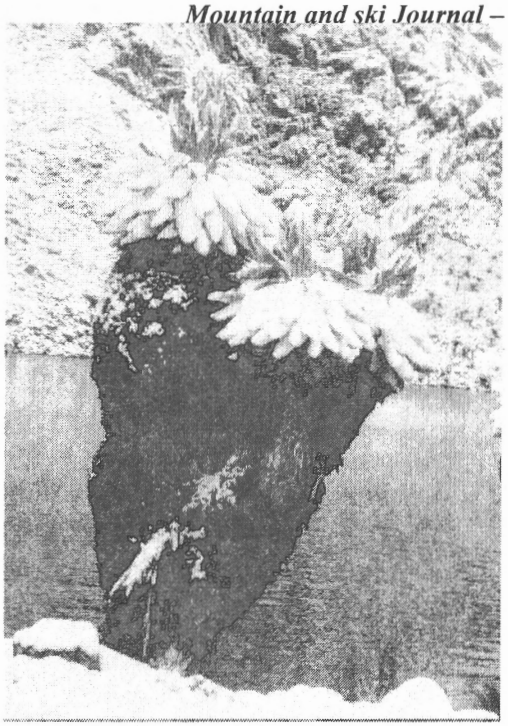
"Yesterday… it snowed". The three mumbled their agreement. They'd almost been snowed in at the Kami Rescue Hut on the north side of the mountain, then.

"Today… it snowed". Again the three agreed in unison. They'd had to circle half of the mountain with backpacks weighing in at 35kg each. No porters. No guides. Just three UCT students surrounded by a magic, snow-covered world of mountainous lakes and tropical swamp vegetation.

"And right now…" The rest of the sentence was lost as a clump of snow dislodged from the tin roof and landed on the balcony outside. It was snowing so heavily that one could only just make out the expanse of the massive Lewis glacier from the balcony. The twin peaks of Batian and Nelion which lay beyond the glacier were hidden behind the thick cloud of snow.

They had been looking forward to this climb for months. For all three, the 5199-metre summit of Mount Kenya would represent the culmination of their mountaineering careers[1]. It was said to be the toughest mountain in Africa. And now, their dreams had been shattered by ice on the summit. In despair, they decided to head west, into the heart of the African Rift Valley. It was here that they came upon Lake Naivasha; the perfect place to drown their sorrows[2].

Five days later, the sun was setting over the Gates of Hell. It was the spectacular 120-metre high cliffs, which formed a gate to



the plains of the Masai Mara further south that gave this national park the name of 'Hell's Gate'. As the sun sunk deeper, the glow changed from orange to golden on the rusty brown columns of rock. "Off belay" shouted the geologist. A moment later, the medic floated down onto the ground. "Maybe we better get going, chaps" said the archaeologist. It was getting late. And this WAS a national park, after all. But people were allowed to walk in it. So there wouldn't be any dangerous animals, right? Right?

Five minutes later the metallic ring of cutlery hitting a large pot filled the African night, echoing in between the cliffs. Anyone looking for the source of the sound might have picked up three small lights, making their way slowly in the general direction of the camp site. Every now and then, one of the headlights would make a nervous swing backwards, illuminating the two faint yellow eyes that followed. Eyes which were coming closer. Eyes which seemed, unfortunately, to be drawn to the metallic ring of cutlery hitting a large pot. So much for the medic's strategy of getting away from the Spotted African Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*).

[1] Statement taken from C. Haumann
[2] Statement taken from J. Orton

A few days (and some of the best crack-climbs *ever*) later, the three set their sights west once again. Their travels took them into the fertile lands of Uganda, 'the pearl of Africa'[3]. Here they did all the usual things that tourists visiting dictatorial countries in the middle of civil war do: see the source of the Nile as it flows out of Lake Victoria, stand naked under 90-metre waterfalls, have lunch with the president's legal advisor, and so on. All in all, it was the perfect way to end 3 weeks of travelling in East Africa.

A Final Thought

Never, during any of our travelling, did I hold any illusions about our main reason for coming to Kenya: to climb Africa's toughest mountain. Our failure was only occasionally far from my thoughts. But in retrospect, I think our setback taught me more about mountaineering than a successful summit would have doneMountaineering, after all, is about patience as much as it is about skill.

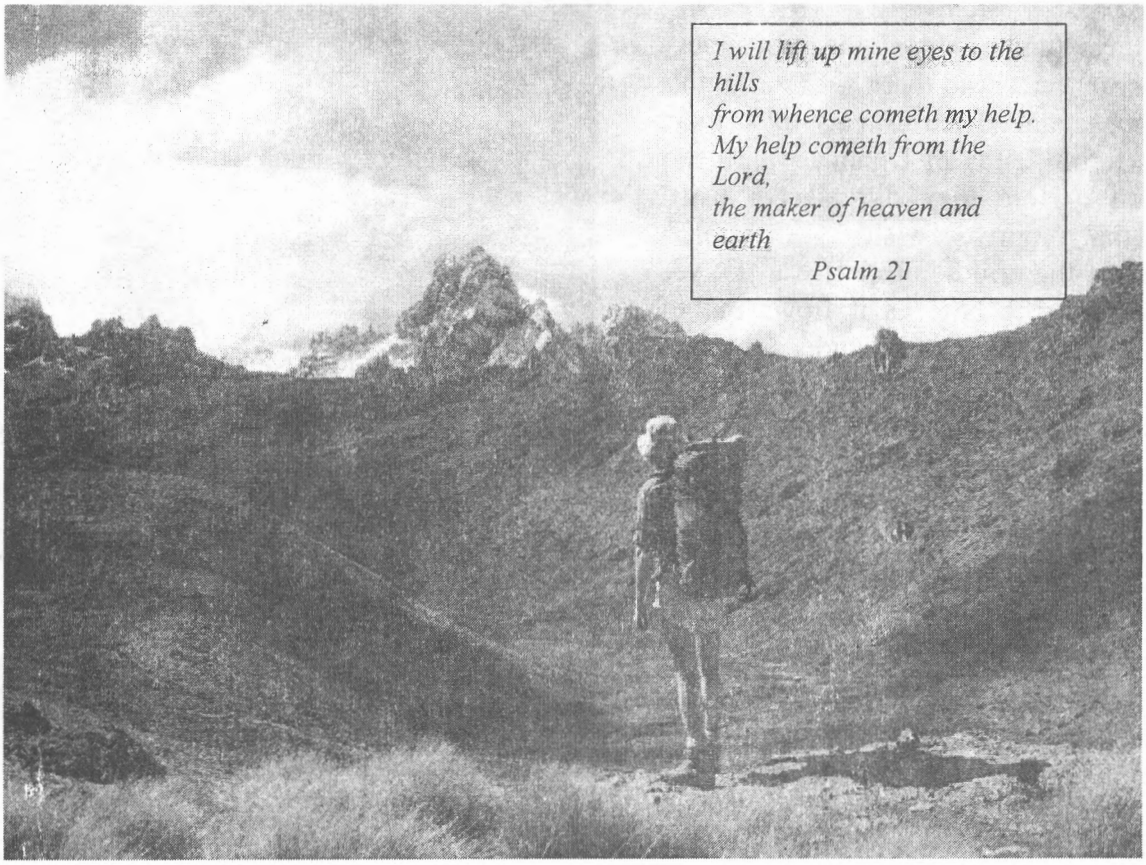
Another interesting place we visited was Lake Nakuru national Park. We were suddenly awoken at 2am by a ridiculously loud roar. "A buffalo," remarked the archaeologist from his drunken slumber. The geologist, keen to give a contribution, hastily said, "No, that's the territorial call of a male African lion." Well, at least we had the 0,6 mm thick tent sheet to protect us.[4]



May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
the rains fall softly upon your fields and,
until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

An Irish blessing

[3] Statement taken from old Winston Churchill.
[4] Actually, there was also a 6-foot high voltage electric fence between us and the lion. But hey, only losers read footnotes, right?



i thank You God for most
this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly
spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky
;and for everything
which is natural which is
infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive
again today,
and this is the sun's birthday
;this is the birth
day of life and of love and of
wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably
earth)

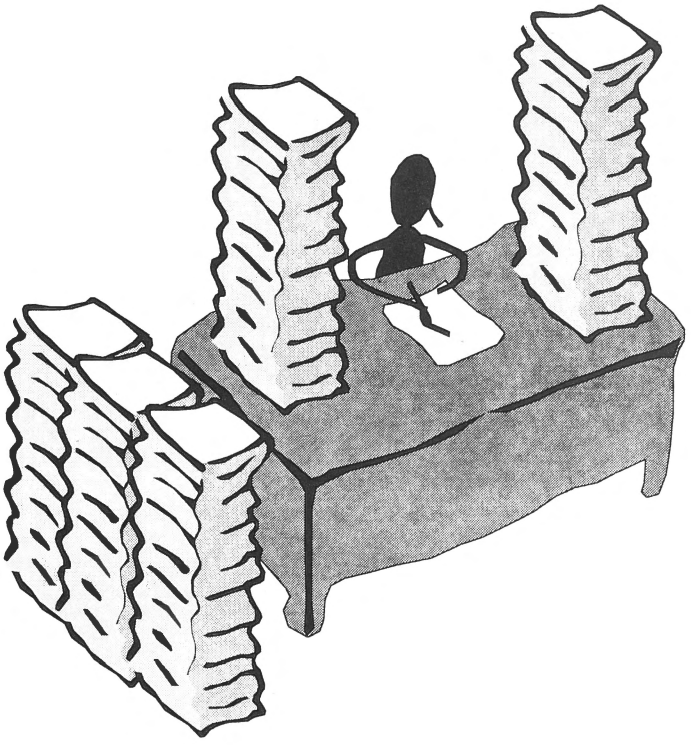
how should tasting touching
hearing seeing
breathing any – lifted from
the no
of all nothing – human
merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears
awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are
opened)

e.e. cummings

Our grateful thanks…

So many of you eased the burden of work for us and made the job of producing the 1999 Journal so much easier – to all of you our heartfelt thanks:



- Last year's journal editor Olly Leinberger
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- Mavauna Iles
- Mr. Preiss of Nasionale Pers
- Everyone from the Mountain and Ski Club who contributed to this journal, whether by means of an article, a photo or supportive word.
- Anyone who we might have forgotten, please remind us so we can give you the acknowledgement you deserve!

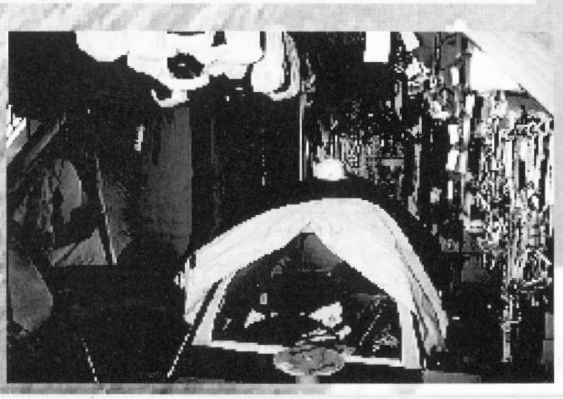
Thank you to everyone in the Mountain and Ski Club for your contribution to making us the *1999 Club of the Year!*

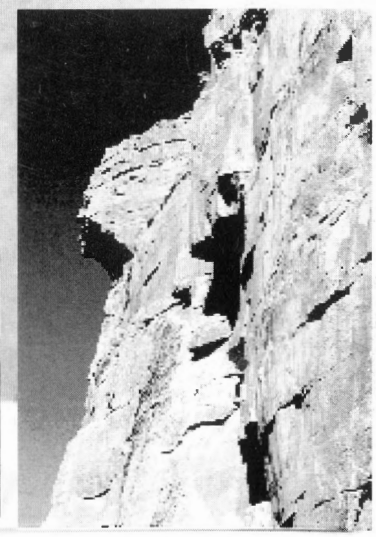
Well done Mountain and Ski!

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